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APRIL 7, 1923
VOL. LXVII
No. 6

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE 20 Cents



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homa City, was making \$600 a month on a ranch and then earned \$524 in two weeks as a salesman. Warren Hartle, Chicago, spent ten years in the railway mail service. Then jumped into selling, and multiplied his earnings six times the first year.

These men were formerly clerks, bookkeepers, factory workers, farm hands, mechanics, machinists, chauffeurs, firemen, motormen, conductors, etc. Their success proves that previous experience or training has nothing to do with success in the selling field. It proves that any man who wants to, and who is willing to put in a few hours of spare time each week, can quickly get a selling position and make big money. *And they started with this free test.*

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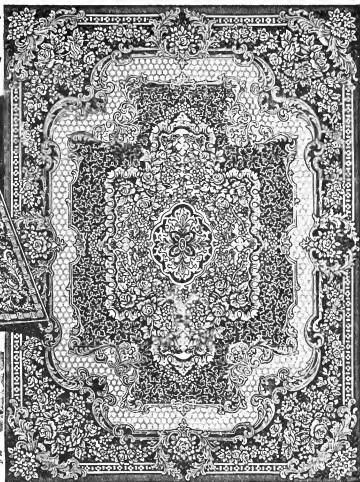
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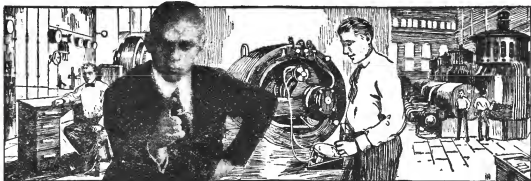
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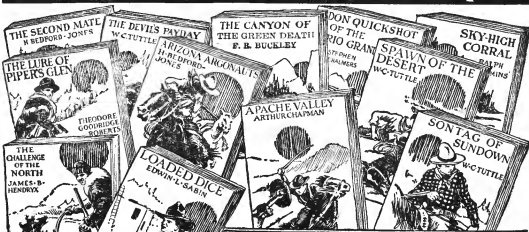
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Somewhere in the Caribbean

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Dollar-berry Bush," "A Transplanted Tenderfoot," Etc.

Francis Lynde is a gifted author. One of his especial gifts is the ability to "shift into high," as it were, from the very start. His readers are never asked to possess their souls in patience while he stokes his fires, gets up steam, and laboriously gathers headway. He invariably leaps away to a running start. But that isn't all. Having set a killing pace from the crack of the starting gun, Mr. Lynde gathers speed steadily. The interest is not merely sustained to the end. It is increased page by page. How it is done is a secret that only the great writers seem to know. We could not reveal it if we would. All we can say is that Francis Lynde is among the favored few who know the mystic formula. If you want to see the formula being applied at its best, you will find its exemplification in "Somewhere in the Caribbean."

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE LIGHTS WENT OUT.

YOU may say what you please about the joys of outdoor life in a semi-tropical climate, but I was sweating in the Florida Everglades simply and solely because I had gotten in bad with the Carter Construction Company on a dam-building job in the Colorado mountains and for no climatic reason whatever.

Not to make a mystery of the Colorado affair, I may say here that I knew the job was as crooked as a dog's hind leg from start to finish; graft in the pay rolls, graft in the purchasing of material, graft in the estimates; the opportunity for all this lying in the fact that our company had farmed out most of the work to irresponsible subcontractors. Hiram Carter, president of our company—a finer, straighter old citizen

never lived—knew nothing about the stealings; he wouldn't, naturally, because he took no part in the active management; but Jeffreys, vice president and chief executive, did. And when the thing blew up, I, as supervising engineer for the responsible company, proved to be the most convenient scapegoat.

Parker Jeffreys didn't come to me himself; he sent his son, Wickham, a young rakehell who was a striking example of what loose money can do toward spoiling reasonably decent stock in the second generation. The interview took place in Denver, whither I had been summoned by a curt wire, and the battleground actual, if you could call it such, was the lobby of the Brown Palace Hotel.

"I guess it's up to you to do the fade-out, Ainsley," was the way the deputy executioner put it as he was lighting his third cork-tipped cigarette. "The pater doesn't want to institute criminal action and he will have a good excuse not to if you vanish over the horizon. You've known all about this crookedness on the part of the 'subs'—you admit it; and while I don't say you were standing in with them, you know about how a jury would look at it."

I did; and I knew that I had had verbal instructions—nothing in writing, of course—to keep hands off in the matter of the sub-contractors' estimates and material purchases. Also I knew that I was fighting the fiercest battle of my life to keep from making young Jeffreys pay the price of my humiliation right where he sat lounging easily in the lobby armchair and regarding me half indifferently, half cynically through the rising curls of cigarette smoke. He was what an older generation of Westerners called a "dude;" high-priced clothes of a cut a lap or so ahead of the fashion, immaculate linen, patent leathers, socks and tie a color match, not much jewelry but more than any real man would wear.

"This was all cut and dried before you left New York, I suppose?" I said, holding myself in check as best I could.

"About letting you down easy! Naturally. On account of your acquaintance with the Carters. The pater is willing to go even farther. You have had a better offer from somebody else and you've taken it."

"Oh, I have, have I?" I snapped. "What might it be?"

"A railroad-building job in Peru; firm of English contractors, Finlay, Holmes & Finlay—you ask for 'em in Lima," he answered casually. "The next sailing from San Francisco will be on the thirteenth. You'll have just time to catch your steamer if you leave Denver to-night."

The cold-bloodedness of the thing was enough to plant a vengeful devil in a saint. Like the scapegoat of old I was not only to be turned out of the flock; I was to be driven into the wilderness. I knew well enough why Wickham Jeffreys was so willing to stick the knife into me and turn it around in the wound. Hiram Carter and my father had begun life on adjoining farms in Indiana and Alison Carter and I had been children together. In our pinafore days we had solemnly promised to marry—a bit of childish sentiment we had both laughed over many times since. Not that I had been finding it any laughing matter after I grew up and became man enough to realize what a heartbreaking beauty Alison had developed into. But there were no pins left standing in that alley. The year after my graduation from the engineering school, dad had died a disappointed and broken man; and Alison's father was—well, he was now a millionaire two or three times over. Rumor had it that Wickham Jeffreys meant to marry into the company and because Alison and I still exchanged letters once in a while I guessed that in addition to making me the goat in the dam-building steal he thought it offered a good chance to shove me into a good, deep background.

"It is all arranged then?" I inquired, still holding myself down.

He nodded. "You'll find your passage taken when you get to Frisco. We can hold up this investigation until after you've left the country. It seemed the easiest way out of the mess."

"Suppose I tell you to go to hell and take my chance on the witness stand?" I suggested.

"You won't do anything like that," he returned coolly. "I don't say that you mightn't make trouble for the Carter Company; perhaps you could, though you'd have nothing but your unsupported word. But you're not going to drag your father's old neighbor into court to refute a charge of conspiracy and graft. What you are going to do is to take the night train for the Coast."

I may own frankly that I was a murderer

in all but the actual fact at the moment when young Jeffreys got out of his chair and stooped to flick the cigarette ashes from his knee with a handkerchief fine enough to have been a woman's. His rising was the signal that the interview was ended. As he walked away toward the elevators, I had another struggle with the man-killing devil inside of me, and it was only the thought that after all there might possibly be some sort of a future with a comeback that restrained me.

This is enough and more than enough of the condition precedent, as the lawyers say. But to wind it up and tuck the end in I may add that I didn't go to Peru or even to San Francisco. There were two night trains leaving Denver at about the same hour; one for the West and another for the Southeast. I took the latter and within a fortnight had landed a job as assistant engineer on a drainage project in the Florida Everglades—in a region where nobody knew me or had ever heard of me; a grave deep enough in all conscience, but not so deep as an exile's in Peru. I was still in America and on the same continent at least with Alison.

It was not until some five months of a mosquito-bitten existence had been worried out in the Florida littoral that I had my first word from the outside world. There were two other assistants on the drainage job with me but since we were running three gangs there was plenty of isolation. Mail came in only once a week and inasmuch as I had written to nobody since leaving Colorado there were no letters for me. But the spell was broken one day when a negro from the lower camp came up with a monogrammed envelope addressed to me, "Somewhere in Florida." I knew both the monogram and the handwriting. They were Alison's.

In a maze of wonderment as to how she had contrived to trace me, I read her brief note:

DEAR DICK: Just on the hopeful chance that this may reach you in time: If you are not too far away can't you manage to come to dinner with us to-night? We are here at Miami in the yacht and I'll see to it that you get enough to eat. I suppose you haven't any dinner coat, but never mind that; come just as you are.

ALISON.

P. S. Why haven't you written me in a whole half year?

If the sluggish drainage canal we were

cutting through the black, peaty soil had suddenly changed its course to ooze the wrong way I could scarcely have been more astonished. In the first place I hadn't the slightest idea that Alison was in Florida or within a thousand miles of it; and in the second it seemed little less than miraculous that she should have known how to find me. No matter. If she had called me from heaven or hell I think I should have tried to get across to her. In half an hour I had presented myself at the chief's tent two miles down the canal.

"Sure you may go," was the good-natured permission given after I had asked for over-night leave to go to Miami. "And you needn't cut it to a single night unless you want to. Make it a week-end if you feel like it. Friends from the North?"

"Yes," I admitted and then adding something about not having much time to waste I hurried away before he should ask other and less easily answered questions.

Alison was right about the dinner coat. I had nothing in my kit remotely resembling one—or the sartorial appurtenances that go with it. But I did have a clean shirt and a change from my working clothes. And the yacht conventions, as I remembered them, were not very rigorous.

As I was borrowing a light rowboat from the dredge equipment, Westcott, our chief, called to me from the canal bank to ask if I didn't want one of the negroes to row me down. If I had accepted his offer things might have turned out differently—though perhaps not. But my lucky—or unlucky—star must have been in the ascendant for I thanked him and said "no" and pulled away, going as straight to my fate as if the painter of the light skiff had been a tow-roped hitched to that same lucky—or unlucky—star.

It was coming on to dusk when I reached Miami by auto from the outlet of the drainage canal and made my way to the bay front. The winter tourist season was on and there were a number of yachts and motor cruisers moored at the landings and others with their riding lights already displayed at anchor in the bay.

Though Alison hadn't mentioned the name of the yacht in her letter I took it for granted that it would be the *Waikiki*, the seagoing miniature liner upon which her father had lavished the good half of a king's ransom in the building and in which I had

once been a guest on a run down the New England coast to Mount Desert. I was not mistaken. The trim little ship, ghostlike in its spotless white paint, was riding at anchor a few hundred yards from the water front and almost at my feet I found her dinghy with a single sailor—a Provincetown Portuguese from his looks—waiting as if for a passenger.

"You are from the *Waikiki*?" I asked.

"*Si, senhor.* I wait for wan Meestaire Onslee-e-e."

It was quite like Alison to send a boat for me; no girl was ever more thoughtful for other people's comfort. So I got aboard, telling the sailor that I was his man; and a few minutes later I had climbed the accommodation ladder to the yacht's deck.

As I hoped she might, Alison herself met me as I set foot on deck, and she was alone.

"*Dick!*" she exclaimed, giving me both of her hands. "I knew you'd come if the place where you had buried yourself were not more than a thousand miles away! When did you get my letter?"

"A little before noon. It came up in the company launch."

"And the launch brought you down?"

"No; I came in a skiff—and I've been all afternoon on the job. But never mind about me. Tell me about yourself. Are you feeling as fit as you look?"

This was no empty fill-in on my part. There may have been more beautiful things in a world of beauty than she was, standing there in the softened light of the shaded awning electrics, white-clad in yachting flannels and with a round little white hat devoid of trimmings of any sort crushed down over her masses of red-gold hair—there might have been, I say, but I doubted it. Yet there was a shadow of trouble in the eyes that I used to make her shut and let me kiss when she was four and I was eight.

"Am I well? Physically, yes; so well that it almost hurts. But in another way. Dick, I *had* to see you and talk with you! There isn't anybody else. We weren't coming here; we were going on to Havana without stopping. But I insisted. I said I wanted to see how much Miami had grown since we were here two winters ago."

"You knew I was here or near here?"

"By the merest chance. It was almost a miracle. Wickham said you were in South America; he has always said so. Do you remember, the night you left Denver last

summer, you sat in the Pullman smoking room and talked with a nice old gentleman from the East?"

"Not particularly," I said. "I have talked with a good many men in Pullman smoking rooms, first and last."

"Well, you did; an elderly man with gray hair and little butlerish side whiskers; a Mr. Carroll from Baltimore. From what you said he gathered that you had been with the Carter Company and were leaving to come down here."

With these particulars to help, I did remember. The old gentleman had been right—fatherly and sympathetic and it had eased my soreness a little to confide in him.

"And with a whole worldful of people to spill it to he had to search you out and tell you?" I marveled.

"It just happened," she went on hurriedly. "I know his daughter; we were in Wellesley together. And the Carrolls summer on Mount Desert, as daddy and I do. One day we were talking about South America, Mr. Carroll and I, and I said I had a friend there—in Peru—and mentioned your name. He said 'no,' that you were in Florida on a drainage canal near Miami; that you told him you were going there."

"It's a little world," I said; the bromidism slipping out before I could stop it. "I was there and I am here. Are you glad to see me, Allie?"

"Wonderfully glad, Dick—and thank-ful!"

"Wait a minute," I interposed; "do you know how I came to leave Colorado?"

"I don't believe a single word of it!" she broke out hotly. "That is one of the things I wanted to talk about; but there are others—much more terrible things. How long can you stay?"

"This evening, you mean?"

"We shall have no chance to talk this evening; there are too many people aboard and—and I think we won't be given a chance to talk. Can you stay over to-morrow and meet me at the hotel?"

"If that is what you want I can't do anything else."

"You're good, Dick—always good and splendidly reliable. I—daddy and I—need help tremendously and you must tell me what to do. I—there's something awful about to—"

That was the end of it. A Jap steward, appearing as if he had materialized out of

the deck at our feet, was whispering in Oriental sibilants, "The honorable dinner is served," and Alison turned and led the way to the cabin companion stair.

After what she had said I was prepared to meet a goodly number of people in the yacht party. The *Waikiki* could accommodate any number of guests up to a score or so. But including myself there were only eleven to gather about the dinner table in the white-and-gold saloon; five men and six women. With a single exception they were all strangers to me and in the wholesale introduction I didn't even get the names straight. That was partly because of the exception. Wickham Jeffreys was the one person that I knew and his blank astoundment at seeing me was only equaled by mine at finding him posing as the host of the party in the Carter yacht.

At once I realized that Alison had not only failed to give Jeffreys her true reason for wishing to stop at Miami; she had given him no hint that I was to make one at that night's dinner table. And in some way that I didn't understand, or rather for some reason that was not yet made plain, I could see that my presence was just about as welcome to him as a snowstorm in July would be to a grower of oranges. He had evidently been believing his own story—that I was safely backgrounded against the Peruvian Andes. After the first gasping, "Hah! how are you, Ainsley?" he ignored me completely, striving, as it appeared, to convey the impression to the others that I was Alison's guest and none of his.

In the seating I was placed between a man with a hanging lower lip and bibulous eyes—who answered, as I found, to the name of Matthewson and was a New York stockbroker—between this man and a young woman who began on me by saying, "Rotten of Alison not to let me get your name in the introduction. Mine's Sefton—Peggy for short." And then out of a clear sky: "An old flame of Alison's, I take it? But you're ages too late. Wick's got the field beaten to a frazzle. Shouldn't wonder if there's a wedding in Havana."

This calm announcement knocked me speechless. Alison the wife of Wickham Jeffreys? It was simply unthinkable! Was that the trouble she was going to confide to me? If so, it certainly deserved all the adjectives she had used in speaking of it.

After I had found my tongue again and

was supplying the missing information as to my name I took occasion to measure the Sefton young woman up with the other members of the party. As nearly as I could determine she seemed to be an average sample. The table talk was all of booze and sport, with a very modern disregard for what our fathers and mothers would have called the common decencies. How on earth Alison came to be in this galley I couldn't imagine. I did not need to remark her downcast eyes and rising color at some of the table stories to assure me she was as much out of her proper element as a snowball would be in Hades. And yet the *Waikiki* was her father's yacht.

In a very short time I was given to understand plainly what the southern cruise of the yacht meant to the party as a whole. Its destination was Cuba and its object was to escape the restrictions of prohibition. The men and women of the party were not Alison's friends; they were Wickham Jeffreys'. And they were pointing like trained beagles for a land of free gaming and plentiful liquor. More than once the man Matthewson on my right growled out his impatience at the stopover in Biscayne Bay and the delay it was imposing, and the sentiment found ready echoes on all sides.

The black coffee was served on the after deck under the lighted awning, and in the shift from the saloon I contrived to shake off the young Sefton person—though she maliciously made it difficult for me to accomplish—and to draw Alison a little aside in the outdoor grouping.

"You are quite paralyzed, I know, and you have a perfect right to be," she began in a low undertone. "I can't explain now; Wickham will see to it that I don't get the chance. But to-morrow—"

Jeffreys had sauntered across to where we stood at the rail and he looked me over as he might have looked at a horse he was thinking of buying.

"So you came back from Peru, did you, Ainsley?" he said, flipping his cigarette stub overboard.

"No," I returned shortly. "I didn't go." "Ah; that was a mistake, I think. Good people to work for—those Englishmen. What are you doing in Miami?"

I considered it very pointedly none of his business what I was doing but for Alison's sake I couldn't quarrel openly with him on the deck of her father's yacht. So I

told him briefly about the drainage canal project. He left us at that, but before we could resume anything like a confidential talk the little Sefton brute came to us and though we saw nothing more of Jeffreys the young woman stuck to us like a leech; was still sticking an hour later when, despairing of getting a moment's privacy with Alison in that environment, I took my leave.

"To-morrow morning at the Royal Palm," Alison got a chance to whisper, as I was going over the side; and with this as her last word I took my place in the stern sheets of the dinghy.

As a matter of course I was given no slightest warning of what was lying in wait for me. The Portuguese sailor who had been my boatman in pulling off to the *Waikiki* was officiating again and I paid no attention to him as he bent to his oars and sent the dinghy shoreward. I had enough to think about to render me oblivious to the surroundings, the bay with its fleet of pleasure craft, the water front of the little city with its twinkling electrics. What was Alison Carter's trouble? And how did it come that her father's yacht had been turned over to Wickham Jeffreys and his party of booze fighters and that she was a member of that party? More than all, what foundation, if any, was there for the Sefton girl's prophecy that there would be a wedding in Havana?

It was the blindest of puzzles and one thing only was clear. Alison had known that I was in Florida and that I could probably be reached from Miami. And in her trouble, whatever it might be, she was turning instinctively to me. Good. I'd help her if I could—and to any length; even to the length of pitching Wickham Jeffreys overboard and taking the *Waikiki* back to New York, if that were what she wished me to do. Our childhood friendship might stand sponsor for that much, at any rate.

At this point in the determinative reverie I came awake to the fact that the dinghy was no longer headed directly shoreward; that it was bumping up against the bilge of a schooner-rigged vessel that seemed to be drifting seaward on the outgoing tide. Before I could ask the Portuguese what he was about, two men flung themselves over the side of the drifting vessel and dropped into the dinghy. In the starlight I saw the bigger of the pair take a limp object like a sausage from his coat pocket and brandish

it over my head. The next instant I had a fleeting impression that one of the masts of the drifting ship had fallen over on me and the twinkling shore lights went out in blank darkness.

CHAPTER -II.

GOING AND COMING.

When I came to myself it was a bit difficult to patch things together in any sort of connected sequence. My head felt as big as a bushel basket and my tongue was like a dry stick in my mouth. At first I thought I must be stone blind; the most strenuous eye effort revealed no ray of light. Then I realized that I was lying on the rough floor of some windowless den or other; that the floor was rising and falling in rhythmic undulations; and that the sustained rumbling drumming in my ears was not the stamp and go of the engines of the canal dredge to the music of which I had lately been awakening at my camp in the Everglades.

Of course the sequences straightened themselves out in due time; Alison's letter—the long pull down the canal—dinner in the *Waikiki*—my curiously interrupted attempt to go ashore afterward. What exactly had happened in the dinghy after the two men had dropped into it from the rail of the slowly drifting vessel? Had one of them hit me with the limp-sausage thing he had drawn from his pocket? If so, why? And what and where was this uneasy pit of darkness in which I was lying?

The sense of smell and that of hearing quickly answered the last of these queries. The unmistakable stench of bilge water told me that I was in the hold of a ship, and with the stench there was a whiff of alcohol. Also, the sustained rumbling and steady vibration and the rise and fall of my rough-floor couch said plainly enough that the vessel was a motor craft, or at least an auxiliary, and that it was at sea.

Afterward it occurred to me to wonder why I did not at once hit upon the explanation which would immediately answer all the perplexing queries. The accounting was simple enough if I had only put two and two together. But my buzzing head and half-addled faculties refused to coordinate and I was still trying to flog the mental team into line when I heard voices and clumping footsteps, and a ray of yellow lantern light began to dilute the darkness.

Dissembling a stupor which was really more than half the fact I was presently conscious of the fact that two men were standing over me and that one of them was throwing the lantern light on my face. Through half-opened eyelids I tried to make them out; and did, dimly. They were pretty rough-looking customers—pirates, I should have called them if the time had been a century or so earlier. One was short and thickset, with the expressionless eyes of a pig and a stubbly black beard that seemed nothing more than a shameless neglect of the razor. The other was a giant in stature and build and he reminded me of the pictures of ogres in the children's fairy tales; cropped beard, wide mouth, flaring nostrils, eyes with a smoky look of savagery in them.

"Shammin', d'ye think?" growled the big man, holding the lantern still closer to my face.

"We'll see," returned pig eyes and with that he planted the toe of his sea boot in my ribs.

That was sufficient. As if the brutal kick had been a tonic to clear away all the brain cobwebs, I leaped up and flung myself upon the kicker. Since they were two to one it was a short battle. At its close the giant had my right arm twisted back in some sort of a jujutsu hold that threatened to dislocate it at the shoulder.

"Oho! Ye'd put up a scrap, would you?" he offered, giving the arm a twist that nearly made me forget my manhood and yell for mercy. "That's all the thanks we get for pullin' ye out o' the pen, is it?"

"For what?" I raged.

"You know well enough for what. It's lucky you've got a good friend or two left that wouldn't see ye disgracin' everybody that belongs to you. All the same, you've got to work your passage on this hooker. You're an engineer, they're tellin' me. Get along aft and dry-nurse that pusher engine for a spell. 'Tis long since she's had a granduit engineer to wait on her."

I was left no choice as to obedience to the first part of this command. Retaining the twisting hold on my wrist the giant ran me ahead of him through the stinking hold, the short man following with the lantern. Through a bulkhead door I was thrust into the after hold where a heavy-duty motor was thumping away at its task of screw twirling and where the bilge stench was

thinned—or thickened—with the reek of gasoline.

"There's your job," said my captor, giving me a final shove in the direction of the laboring power producer. "You keep that baby turnin' over for what little it's worth. And you'd best keep awake on the job, at that. The gasoline feed has a trick o' jogglin' loose by times and if it springs a leak and sets us afire you'll be the first one to get cooked, d'ye see?"

With no more talk than this the pair left me, climbing a short ladder to disappear through a hatch through which, before it was closed after them, I had a glimpse of the stars. Whatever was to come afterward I was a prisoner for the time being, and if my jailers were not gallows birds of the most unmistakable sort their plumage certainly belied them. Massaging my strained shoulder I sat upon an empty biscuit box and tried to make sure that I was not merely having a bad dream. The two men had left me the lantern—carelessness fairly criminal, I thought, in a gasoline-engine hold with a putatively leaky fuel line—so I was not in total darkness. Gasping in the half-stifling, black-hole atmosphere of the place I tried to pull myself together.

What was this fantastic rigmarole about saving me from the penitentiary? Would the drumming motor, keeping even time to the throbbing pain in my head, help me to hammer out a sensible answer to that question? Like a flash such as might have followed an explosion of the gaseous reek of the engine hold the answer shot itself at me. Five months earlier Wickham Jeffreys, acting for his father but also turning a trick for himself, had tried to get rid of me by shipping me to South America—and thought he had succeeded. Was this another and more primitive attempt to efface me?

Slowly, because my head was still aching like sin, the pieces of the puzzle came together and began to arrange themselves in some sort of order. As I have said, after the brief butt-in upon Alison and me as we stood at the rail of the *Waikiki* Jeffreys had disappeared, leaving—or sending—Peggy Sefton to take his place as a preventer of confidences. In the hour, more or less, during which I had lingered in the hope of breaking the Sefton combination Jeffreys had had ample time to set a trap for me.

By this time I hadn't much doubt of the

nature of the trap and the identity of the trapping vessel. The faint smell of alcohol in the forehold told the story. I had been sandbagged and taken aboard a bootlegging craft, shanghaied in good old-fashioned style; and the vessel was probably now on its way to the Bahamas for a cargo of spirits. Just how Jeffreys had gotten in touch with the bootleggers and had been able to cook up the plot in such a short time still remained something of a mystery, but that was a detail. The plot had worked.

The past thus accounted for, hypothetically at least, the future was the next consideration. What were the bootleggers going to do with me? That they would attempt to hold me as a member of the crew for any considerable length of time was incredible. Besides, it wouldn't be necessary. A day or so would probably measure the length of the *Waikiki's* stay at Miami and after she sailed she would be lost to me and Jeffreys' purpose would be fully served. But there was small comfort in this conclusion. There was Alison and her still unexplained trouble—Alison as a sort of prisoner, it seemed to me, in the disreputable booze party aboard the *Waikiki*.

With hot pricklings of helpless rage I pictured Alison's disappointment when she should go to the hotel in Miami and find that I wasn't keeping my promise to meet her there; that I had vanished into thin air. At that moment, if setting the kidnapers' ship on fire would have subserved any good end I felt quite equal to the applying of the match—or the smoking lantern wick.

A little further reflection showed me a still deeper depth of Wickham Jeffreys' suddenly devised plot for getting rid of me. If I hadn't been a criminal in the Colorado instance he had taken pains to make it appear that I was one now. As a member of the crew of a bootlegging craft—and what court would believe that I wasn't a voluntary member?—my status was fixed. If we should be caught I would go to jail with the ogre and the pig-eyed one, who would doubtless swear that I was equally guilty with themselves. Or they might even swear that I was their leader.

Taken as a whole it was a most dispiriting prospect. Escape from a gang of kidnapers on land was one thing but at sea it was quite another. If the vessel, to the

chief engineer's post of which I had been so suddenly and forcibly promoted, should go to Nassau for its lading there might be a chance for me. I knew there was a regular boat plying between Miami and Nassau in the season and it was only a night's run across. I had money—

The thought of the money made me feel mechanically in my pockets. My pocket-book was gone and so was my watch. The kidnapers had not only sandbagged me; they had robbed me as well. It was a small matter, I told myself; it was only a half chance spoiled. The probabilities were that the vessel wasn't headed for Nassau; it was more likely that it would pick up its contraband cargo at some one of the unfrequented islands of the group. In which case the half chance to escape would become no chance at all.

Musing sourly over the trap into which I had fallen and more sourly still over the stupid ease with which I had permitted its jaws to close upon me I wore away the painful hours and finally fell asleep to the thumping grind of the motor—did this and came broad awake some time later at the sound of a raucous voice bellowing down at me through the opened hatch at the ladder head.

"Asleep at the switch, are ye?" yelled the voice. "Shut off the power, afore I come down there and cave yer ribs in!"—this with a string of maledictions too profane to repeat. And after I had stopped the motor: "Now then, stand by to take signals, ye damn' scupper lubber!"

There were no bells in the engine hold and the signals were passed by word of mouth from the man at the wheel. Backing and filling by turns the desired position was finally secured and I heard the rasping roar of the chain cable as the descending anchor ran it out through the hawse hole. We were evidently at our destination, wherever that might be.

To my relief I was permitted, or rather ordered, to climb out of the hot and stifling machinery den to the deck. The arm-twisting giant who had so maltreated me in the night had not misstated the fact in calling the vessel a "hooker." Above the water line at least she looked a clumsy enough craft, with the lines and rig of a small coasting schooner. The dawn was just breaking as I scrambled through the hatchway to the deck. The schooner was anchored in a lit-

tle bay; and the bay as nearly as I could make out was an indentation in the coast of an islet which appeared to be uninhabited.

Amidships two men whose figures I could only dimly distinguish were clewing down the foresail and my two captors were wrestling with the bunched canvas of the mainsail. With an oath the giant ordered me to fall to and help with the clewing and I did it because the time didn't seem to be propitious for inviting another manhandling with the odds of two or possibly four against me.

With the canvas stowed all hands took hold to lift a whaleboat out of its chocks on the roof of the deck house and launch it over the side; and in this operation I got a near-hand view of the two other members of the crew. They were foreigners; Minorcans, as I found out later, and first-class sailormen. How much they knew or cared about the legality of the business in which their vessel was engaged—her name was the *Vesta*, as I learned by seeing it painted on the bow of the whaleboat—was never made apparent to me. They obeyed orders and asked no questions.

When the whaleboat was launched, Dorgan, the giant, ordered me into it with one of the Minorcans and himself took the steering oar. A short pull sufficed to beach the boat which was hauled up on the sands and left while the three of us, with Dorgan leading the way, plunged into the thickening of jungle growth which came almost down to the water's edge. What we found in the thicket was what I was fully expecting to see; a liberal cargo of liquor in cases; stacks and tiers of the boxes ready to be transferred to our schooner.

There were no preliminaries to precede the attacking of the big job. With a grunted, "Get into it, you two," to the sailor and me, Dorgan shouldered one of the cases and led the march back to the stranded whaleboat. Morosely enough and with my head still throbbing painfully from the effects of the sandbagging I fell into line as a stevedore. An uninhabited islet, with the *Vesta* as the only means of escape from it, was not the place for rebellion.

When the whaleboat was loaded so that there was scant room for the sailor and me to man the oars we pulled off to the schooner. In our absence, pig eyes—his name, as I presently learned, was Israel Brill—and the remaining sailor had rigged a sling and a hoist and the cases of contra-

band were taken aboard and lowered into the hold. Five trips we made before Dorgan gave the word to knock off for breakfast, a rough-and-ready meal of canned stuff served with the low roof of the deck house for a table, and then we went at it again, working alternate shifts and continuing through the better part of the forenoon.

During this period of sweating toil in which Dorgan proved himself a man driver of sorts, nothing further was said to explain my kidnaping. But by this time I was in little doubt as to the true explanation. In my short sojourn in Florida I had heard many tales of the rum runners and the chances they took, but it was not believable that the most desperate of them would resort to shanghai methods to recruit their crews. The reasonable explanation was that Dorgan and Brill had been paid to shanghai me. And if the bribe were large enough they would probably see to it that I stayed shanghai'd for as long a time as Jeffreys had bargained for.

From the fact that I speak of these things calmly it must not be supposed that I was taking all this "lying down," as the phrase goes. On the contrary, long before the final load of liquor cases was ferried across to the *Vesta* I was so furious that I couldn't see straight. To say nothing of the sandbagging and the brutal manhandling that had followed it the time had now passed when I had promised to meet Alison. She needed me and my promise was broken. Somebody was going to pay; either the giant or his accomplice or Jeffreys—or all three.

But for the present there was nothing to be done. The bare islet offered no chance of escape and without a weapon of some sort I could accomplish nothing in a mêlée with four antagonists; for I made no doubt the Minorcans would side with their masters if it came to blows. Clearly there was nothing for me to do but to bide my time.

With the cargo stowing finished there was another meal of the canned stuff and it was eaten in silence. When he was through, Dorgan motioned me aft—this time I had eaten with the two sailors—and while Brill was stretching himself out in the shade of the bunched mainsail to sleep the big man herded me down into the little den of a cabin.

"Gettin' your bearin's by this time?" he asked, pushing me roughly to a seat on one of the lockers.

"What I am getting is nothing to what you will get when the proper time comes," I told him wrathfully.

"Still nursin' the big grouch, are you?" he grinned.

"I am still waiting to be told why you shanghaied me."

"I told you that last night," he returned, crumbling some leaf tobacco in his hand to fill his cutty pipe. "Don't you want to keep out o' the pen?"

"The man who paid you for kidnaping me is much more likely to land in the penitentiary than I am," I retorted.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he grunted in mock deprecation; "if that don't beat a hog a-flyin'! Here's your friend a-tryin' his bloomin' hardest to keep you fr'm runnin' your neck into trouble; a-payin' good money to snatch you out o' the jaws o' the devourin' what-you-may-call-it; and you kickin' about it like a bay steer! But it ain't no use. We're aimin' to keep you fr'm wearin' the stripes. Might as well get wise to that first as last."

At this I looked him straight in the eyes.

"You're not fooling anybody with all this talk about 'friends' and the 'penitentiary,'" I said. "You've been paid to keep me out of the way for a certain length of time and the man who hired you to do it is no friend of mine. All I want to know is this: how long is my board paid for on this hooker?"

"That sort o' depends," he answered, sucking hard at the pipe which was refusing to draw well. "I ain't hankerin' to sail shipmates with you no longer'n I have to and neither is Isra'l Brill; you're too damn' grouchy. It might be that we could heave you overboard t'-morrh mornin'—with not too far to swim to get onto the mainland—and then, ag'in, it might'n't."

I knew exactly what that meant. The schooner would be recrossing to the Florida coast with her cargo the following night and if the giant got word that the *Waikiki* had put to sea from Biscayne Bay I would be free to go. Otherwise I wouldn't."

"Well, what about it?" he barked when I made no reply.

"There isn't anything about it except that I'll do you and your partner in this business up cold if I get a chance."

He gave me an exceedingly black look for this and I could see his big teeth bite down upon the stem of his pipe.

"See here, my bucko!" he snarled. "One

bad break out o' you and you'll never see Florida ag'in—n'r no other place this side o' hell. There ain't nobody knows how you made your drop-out in the bay last night and there ain't nobody goin' to know. You try to ball things up for us and you'll get the sandbag ag'in and the next time you wake up the fishes'll be gnawin' at you. D'ye get that?"

"I hear what you say."

"All right. If you want to go on livin' for a spell longer you just let it soak in. Now if you've got any horse sense left you'll turn in and sleep a few lines. Come dark you'll be down in the engine hold ag'in, a-keepin' that leaky gasoline pipe fr'm bustin' down on us."

With this the giant heaved himself up and left me, shutting the companion slide as he went on deck. And if I had had any doubt about my status on board it would have been removed by the click of a hasp and a padlock. I was still a prisoner.

A very cursory examination of the little den of a cabin soon convinced me that I couldn't break out of it while there were four men on deck to take the alarm. But as to that, there was nothing to be gained by trying to acquire any larger liberty while the schooner was at anchor in the islet bay. So, stiffly weary from the strenuous toil of the forenoon, I stretched myself upon one of the dirty bunks and almost immediately fell asleep.

It was pitch dark when Dorgan came to turn me out and from the racket on deck I gathered that Brill and the Minorans were preparing to get the schooner under way. With brittle gruffness the giant ordered me down into the engine hold where the dangerous lantern was already lighted and hung, and I was told to start the motor. As before, Dorgan bellowed the signals down to me and after a short period of maneuvering I was given the order, "Full speed ahead," and the slow rise and fall of the vessel told me that we were once more at sea.

More merciful or less careful than he had been the night before Dorgan left the hatch at the ladder head open. Though the night was warm there was a good breeze and the schooner, as I soon made out, was running close hauled. By consequence the big mainsail served as a wind vane to send a cooling breath now and then into the engine-heated den. After we had been running for per-

haps a half hour one of the Minorcan sailors passed my supper down to me in a pannikin and later handed in a can of black coffee hot from the galley.

That was the beginning of a long night during which I alternately dozed on the cracker-box seat and started awake to examine the dangerous gasoline pipe. Nothing occurred to break the monotony. The weather held good and save for the ground swell the sea was as calm as a mill pond. Out of the last of the dozing periods I was aroused by Dorgan who had descended the ladder far enough to enable him to kick me awake. "Look alive and get onto your job!" he ordered snappishly and a little later he bawled down to me to shut off the motor.

With the power off the silence was almost deafening. From the lapping of the waves along the schooner's side I knew we were still making way slowly under sail; but presently the creaking of blocks and the rattle of the leach rings on the masts gave notice that we were heaving to.

For possibly half an hour, during which time the schooner swung gently to the well and made no headway, nothing happened. Then a muffled stuttering announced the approach of a motor boat and a low-voiced hail was exchanged. This promised a chance to learn something of our whereabouts and I crept up the ladder as far as I dared without showing my head above the coaming of the hatchway.

As nearly as I could judge the motor boat was lying to under the *Vesta's* quarter. At all events I was able to hear quite distinctly most of what was said. It was the newcomer who began.

"The jig's up," was the word that came over the side. "They've piped you off and the cutter's down from *Fernandina* lookin' for you. We saw her searchlight off the inlet less than half an hour ago."

"How do you know they're lookin' for us?" Dorgan asked.

"Got it straight by the underground. How much you got aboard?"

"Just about all she'll hold."

"That settles it, then. Take half a night and more to run it ashore and if you're here at daybreak the cutter'll get a wireless and be down on us."

Following this there was a low-toned argument of which I could catch only the drift. It seemed that the rum runners had

an alternative landing place and the man in the motor boat was urging the necessity of using it in the present instance. For a time Dorgan was obstinate. The other place had its risks, the chief of which was that to reach it a steamer lane would have to be traversed, and in daylight. If the *Vesta* were known and suspected she would be certain to be seen and identified.

The conclusion of the argument came when a beam of light, plainly visible from my perch at the ladder head, swept like a giant finger through the sky overhead. The talk at the schooner's rail stopped as if the light beam had suddenly paralyzed the tongues that were making it. Then somebody swore feelingly—Brill, I think it was—and barked out a command to the crew of two as he sprang for the schooner's wheel.

I had no more than time to drop to the floor of the engine hold before Dorgan was yelling down to me to start the motor and at the same moment I heard the motor boat backing away. Since flight would mean a prolonging of my captivity I made delay as I could, half minded to dart up the ladder and try my luck at reaching the departing messenger boat before it should get out of reach. There was a light land breeze blowing and I could hear Brill cursing the Minorcans for their slowness in making sail.

While I hesitated, with my hands on the engine flywheel to turn it over, Dorgan swung down the ladder into the lantern-lighted pit vomiting profanity. Probably it was only the instinct of self-preservation that made me snatch up a wrench and back away to the port side of the motor. But the brandished wrench did not stop the giant.

"Damn your eyes! You'd double cross us, would you?" he belloved and with that he came for me, all claws to clutch and huge hairy arms to grapple and crush.

CHAPTER III.

THE WHITE SHIP.

As Dorgan came for me I realized that I had chosen the worst possible place for a try-out battle with a man who outclassed me as much as he did. Though at that time I tipped the scale at a husky hundred and seventy pounds and was as fit as a hard-working outdoor life could make me I knew that nothing but cleverness and skill could avail me in a fight with a man who certainly

outweighed me by forty or fifty pounds and whose brute strength was commensurate with his size. And when in addition to that he had me cramped for room, I saw myself beaten before the battle was begun. For not even a past master of prize-ring footwork could have done anything in that cluttered engine hold.

As luck would have it I got in only one blow with the caught-up wrench and that one Dorgan took on a warding arm. Before I could swing at him again he had closed with me across the motor with his huge hands gripping my throat and if he could have kept his hold I should have been a dead man in the few seconds or minutes that one may live in a garroting clutch that shuts off both breath and blood.

But fortunately for me the engine was between us and its cylinders were still so hot from the long drive we had made that they burned whatever they touched. It was the discovery that they would burn that saved me. Clawing and struggling to break the strangle hold I happened to get a knee against the hot cylinders and in all the agony of starting eyeballs and bursting lungs I was still able to catch at the straw of advantage.

With a foot braced against the motor I pulled the giant over upon the hot machinery. He stood it for a second or so and then let go with a bellowing oath. This gave me a chance for a bit of short-arm work but the choking had left me half paralyzed and the blows which should have purchased me a brief breathing space were little more than feeble gestures—there was no punch in them. In a flash he had clutched me again but this time I contrived to dodge the strangle hold and, locked in a mad grapple that neither dared to break, we swayed back and forth over the hot engine, each trying to drag the other down upon the scorching barrier.

In such an awkward wrestling match the lighter man was naturally bound to get the worst of it. Shifting his grip in spite of all I could do to pinion his arms Dorgan finally got the body squeeze he wanted and crushed me until I made sure I could hear my ribs crack—until the lantern-lit den turned first blood red and then black for me. And when I came to I was lying on the floor and Dorgan was starting the motor.

I watched him adjusting spark and throttle, expecting nothing but that he would

pick up the dropped wrench and brain me with it when he was ready. But he didn't. After he had the motor running to please him—and that was at its thumping best—he climbed the ladder and clapped on the hatch, having paid no more attention to me than if I had been a dog which he had first choked and then kicked aside out of his way.

This appeared to be the end of things, for the time being at least. The schooner was evidently running away; down the coast to the southward, I judged, since the breeze had come quartering from the land and the slant of the vessel proved that she was on the starboard tack. And she seemed to be making capital speed; much better than her above-water lines would lead one to expect of her. I could hear the water racing under her counter and the dip to leeward showed that the breeze was freshening.

Painfully I crawled to the cracker-box seat and pulled myself up on it, groping tenderly with investigative fingers to try to determine if Dorgan had broken any ribs in that last life-extinguishing bear hug. He hadn't. Though I was as sore as if I had been beaten with flails I was still whole as to bones. Dorgan was too much for me in a rough-and-tumble, as he had amply proved; yet in all the keen humiliation of the moment I was burning with a fierce desire to get at him in the open, under conditions where the inequality in bulk and weight would not give him such a terrific advantage.

Perhaps this is as good a place as any to say that I come of Scottish stock, as my father-name would imply. That blood, as all the world knows, is slow to anger; but not easily satisfied with its beatings. Crouching there upon the box seat, with every drawn breath a dagger to stab me, it was not strange that I lost sight of everything but a mad determination to wreak vengeance upon the two scoundrels who for a bribe had robbed me of liberty and were making me a football to be kicked hither and yon at their pleasure. Then and there I began to plan to get square in some fashion that would count.

For a weary time, while I studied and plotted, the schooner held on without shifting a sail or starting a sheet, and from her yawing and heeling and the occasional kicking of the lightly buried propeller out

of water it was apparent that the breeze had grown still fresher and was rising to a half gale. I could only guess that we were making rapid southing. Unless the direction of the wind had changed, which seemed unlikely, the *Vesta* could hardly be headed elsewhere than down the Florida coast.

Having no means of knowing at what point the news-bearing motor boat had reached us I could form no idea of the schooner's position from hour to hour, but that was a small matter. In any event I had lost all hope of getting in touch again with the *Waikiki* and *Alison*. Doubtless the yacht was by this time well on its way to Havana; with *Alison* reproachfully concluding that I had failed her in whatever extremity she was facing. All of which made me plot the harder; and perhaps it was the thought centering upon that remark of Peggy Sefton's—that she wouldn't wonder if there would be a wedding in Havana—that finally made me strike hands with a plan as mad as any vamping of the unbalanced. But of that, more in its place.

In due time the remainder of the night wore away and in spite of the aches and pains and other untoward hamperings I got some sleep. When the engine-hold hatch was finally opened again I saw that a new day had come and that the sun was shining. It was Dorgan's ogreish face that looked at me through the square of daylight and his greeting was an oath followed by a command to come up and take my turn at the cook's galley for breakfast.

Stiff and sore, I climbed the steep ladder and stepped out on deck. The first few breaths of good clean fresh air after such a long confinement in the stifling hold nearly knocked me over, but the reviving reaction came quickly and I looked around to take in the new situation. The half gale of the night had subsided to a fair sailing wind and the *Vesta* was still on the starboard tack, headed west by south, as I guessed from the position of the sun, and with a goodly spread of canvas drawing. There was no land in sight but off the port bow I saw the smoke of a distant steamer, apparently westbound, as we were.

Far astern there was another smoke and now I understood what Dorgan had said to the news bearer in the motor boat; that in the dodging run the other was urging the schooner would be in a frequented steamer lane. That lane could be no other than the

strait running between Florida—or the Florida Keys—and Cuba. What was the new destination toward which the *Vesta* was heading? I only knew that it couldn't be Cuba or any of the islands. The United States was the only country in which the liquor cargo could be unloaded at a profit.

Coming to matters nearer at hand I saw that Brill was at the schooner's wheel and that he was getting the last life of speed out of the straining canvas. Dorgan stood at the after rail with a pair of binoculars and a glance showed that he was trying to make out the following vessel whose smoke was blowing in a long plume to leeward. Forward, squatting on deck with their backs against the starboard bulwark, were the two *Minorcans*. One of them was smoking and the other seemed to be asleep.

In the cook's galley I found some remains of breakfast, and these, with a can of coffee, hot, thick and black, went some distance toward making up for the effects of the manhandling I had taken in the night. While I was eating Dorgan came and looked in on me scowling, and I saw that one of his hands was bandaged with a dirty rag; evidence that I had contrived to mark him in the tussle across the hot motor.

"Think you got enough of it last night to do you for a while?" he demanded with an ugly leer.

"It will answer for the present. But I'll take you on again when I can have decent footing and a little more room," I said.

"Oho—you will, will you? Well, lemme tell you; the next time I'm goin' to twist the damn' neck off you! Get that?"

"If you are man enough," I thrust in. Then: "When are you going to put me ashore?"

"When we get damn' good and ready. And that won't be to-day n'r t'-morrh."

"Where are we now?" I inquired, having no idea he would tell me. But he did, crabbedly.

"In the straits. Come night we'll be off Key West if the wind holds." And with that he went aft' again.

Now my work on the drainage canal had made me fairly familiar with the geography of the Florida peninsula. If we were going to be off Key West at nightfall it meant that we were to make our landing somewhere on the western or Gulf side of the peninsula. Thoughtfully I passed the possible landing places in mental review. Of

course a town wasn't necessary for the boot-legging purpose but a road over which trucks could be driven was; and I knew of no practicable road south of Punta Rossa at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River, a few miles below Fort Myers. This was a full hundred miles up the coast from the Keys or possibly a hundred and fifty as the crow flies from Key West.

At the shortest this would mean two or three days more of the floating prison for me; or even a longer time if the wind should remain in its present quarter and the schooner had to beat up the Gulf from Key West. At the prospect the desperate plan I had formulated in the bad hours of the night came up for a calm daylight weighing and measuring. Under favoring conditions the beginning of it at least seemed feasible. But I couldn't see through to the end of it. That part would be on the knees of the high gods.

Tobacco hunger, denied now for some thirty-six hours, accounted for my next out-reaching. Since I couldn't or wouldn't beg Dorgan or Brill for a smoke I strolled forward to where the two sailors were crouched under the weather bulwark.

"Either of you fellows speak English?" I asked.

"Me, I spik leetle bit," replied the one with a pipe.

"I'm about dead for a smoke," I said. "Does that mean anything to you?"

Grimacing good-naturedly he fished in his pocket and brought out another pipe and a sack of tobacco.

"I smoke—you smoke," he said, passing me the necessities; whereupon I squatted beside him and filled and lighted.

For a time I held my peace. I could see Dorgan watching us furtively and I didn't want to give him an excuse to come and drive me aft. Taking a moment when he was again training the glass upon the steamer astern I ventured a question.

"Do you and your partner like this ship?"

The pipe lender shrugged. "No ver' mooch; too many damn-damn."

"I don't like it very much, either," I agreed.

"You been—how you say eet?—shang-hai? What for? You no sailormans."

"Money," I said shortly. "Somebody paid them."

Dorgan had marked me down and was striding forward.

"Get the hell out o' here!" he growled when he came up. "Get back in your hole and look out for that gasoline pipe."

The temptation to try it out with him again was pretty strong as I scrambled to my feet but the prudent Scottish blood got in its word in time. Though I knew that Brill couldn't leave the wheel to chime in I wasn't sure of the Minorcans as yet. So I returned the borrowed pipe and followed the big man aft, dropping into the engine hold when I came to its hatchway, but not before I had taken another look at the sternward steamer which was slowly overhauling us.

That look sent me below with the blood jumping in my veins. Though the overhauling ship was still too far away for identification, even with a glass, there was one thing that could be seen quite plainly. It was painted white!

Naturally, of course, I jumped immediately to the conclusion that it was the *Waikiki* and that was what started the grateful circulation and made me forget my aches and pains in a fine frenzy of excitement. Then all at once I remembered that the steamers of the Fruit Line were also painted white and the excitement died down. Still, there was a bare chance, and after I had tightened up the leaky gasoline connection and had killed time enough to make the sweltering heat of the engine hold a plausible excuse for escaping from it I climbed the ladder and swung myself up to sit on the edge of the hatchway. A quick glance over the stern showed me the white steam vessel apparently in about the same relative position, still too far away for identification.

When I had gone below at Dorgan's command Brill was at the schooner's wheel; but now one of the Minorcans—my pipe lender—had it and neither Dorgan nor Brill was to be seen. I supposed they were down in the little box cabin of the hooker and I wondered a little at the fact that they should both leave the deck at the same time. The deck-house companion slide was open and I could hear a murmur of voices. With a nod to the friendly little foreigner at the wheel I crept forward.

As the murmur of voices had assured me, the two rum runners were in the cabin, and when I broke in as a listener they were talking about me. Pruned of the thickly interlarding profanity, this is what I heard.

"I told you, night afore last when you made that dicker with the bloke fr'm the yacht, that we'd ort to stick to our own knittin'"—this from Brill. "This here kidnapin' side line's goin' to get us into a hell's mess o' trouble afore we're through with it. How do we know who this chap is or what sort of a rumpus we've kicked up by runnin' off with him?"

"Meanin' that the other bird lied to us?" said Dorgan.

"Sure he lied. Anybody can see with half an eye that this feller we've crimped ain't no prison dodger."

"Well, what if he ain't? Haven't we got the money?"

"That's all right. But there's more a-comin'. You take it fr'm me, this chap ain't fallin' for all this as easy as it looks. I don't like the cut of his jib. I believe if he thought it would get him anywhere he'd scrap both of us in a holy minute."

"Huh!" Dorgan sneered; "you've got cold feet, Isra'l—that's all that's the matter with you. Ain't I tellin' you I got his goat last night?"

"Maybe you did and then ag'in maybe you didn't. Then you had to make it worse by nobbin' his watch and money," Brill fumed discontentedly. "You listen to what I'm sayin'. The minute we put him ashore there's goin' to be hell to pay. If he don't make us lose our divvy on this cargo it'll be because we don't give him a chance."

There was silence for a little time and then Dorgan broke it.

"Maybe you're right, after all. We ain't had to pull any graveyard stuff in this game yet but I reckon there's got to be a first time for everything. He'll do it himself if we give him the right office. He's dead crazy to get ashore. It's my notion that there's a heap more to this shanghai business than what floated to the top o' things night afore last."

"Well, what's the play?" Brill asked.

"Short and sweet. Along about dark we can beat up to'ard the keys and show him the land close to—short swim, we'll say. He'll fall for it and go overboard in a hurry. All he wants is a chance. And after he jumps in, the straits current'll do the rest."

"But what if he don't jump?"

I heard Dorgan give his snarling chuckle.

"If he shies you can stub your toe agin' something and stumble over onto him, carelesslike."

I could hear Brill draw his breath with a sound that was almost as shrill as a whistle.

"Me?" he gulped.

"Yes, you, Isra'l; you're used to bumpin' folks off—or leastwise to scuttlin' ships under 'em; and you're the one that's scared to hang onto him till we take port."

After this there was another interval of silence and it was thick enough to be cut with a knife. It gave me a chance to grasp the full meaning of what I had heard. These two kidnapers were coolly planning to drown me!—that is, if I should refuse to drown myself. It was one of those things that couldn't be believed and yet had to be believed. And the motive was so callously inadequate. At the worst the most they had to fear from me was that I might talk after I got ashore and so put a crimp in their liquor smuggling.

While the schooner heeled to the drag of her canvas and the wind sang in the cordage I listened again, ready to retreat if I should hear them stirring to come on deck. But there was no sound save the crackle of a match as one of them lighted his pipe. Finally Brill spoke again.

"Didn't make out that smoke boat that's comin' up astern, did you?"

"Not yet," Dorgan grunted. "She looks like one o' the Fruiterers."

"Not to me," Brill countered. "Not enough top works. I don't like the way she's hangin' onto us."

Dorgan swore morosely.

"Hell! You've got a streak o' the yellow a mile long! S'posin' she's anything you please; s'posin' she a revenue cutter—which she ain't. Can't nobody touch us till we get within the three-mile. There ain't nothin' to you, Isra'l, but a little bit of the know-how about handlin' a windjammer. You'd jump out o' your skin if you was to hear a mouse gnawin'!"

I drew a breath of relief. This was comforting, as far as it went. It assured me that I had at least one truckling coward to deal with. It also told me something else; that while Dorgan was the captain and leader, Brill was the one who knew what little either needed to know about navigating the schooner. The obstacles were clearing away for me, a little at a time. After a bit I heard Brill again.

"I'm nigh about dead for sleep; I reckon that's what makes me so jumpy. S'pose

you could keep her from broachin' to while I turn in for a spell? West and by south's the course."

"Sure I can!" said the giant; and knowing that this was my signal to retreat I edged away from the companion slide and was sitting in the open engine-hold hatchway again when Dorgan made his appearance on deck.

As I expected he would, the bully came straight for me.

"Didn't I tell you to get down in that hold and stay there?" he roared.

"It's too hot down there," I retorted.

"You'll find it a heap hotter in hell," he flung back at me as he went on to check the schooner's course with a stare into the binnacle. Evidently the little Minorcan at the wheel was not steering fine enough, for Dorgan broke out in a blast of profanity and struck him a blow in the chest that would have knocked him down but for his hold on the spokes of the wheel. The somber-faced little man took the blow without a murmur but I saw his dark eyes blaze with suppressed rage as Dorgan went to the after rail and once more focused his glass upon the following steamer.

The giant's prolonged scrutiny of the overtaking vessel gave me leave to do the same. One of the things field engineering does for a man is to train his eyes to long-distance sight and it is quite likely that I saw as much with my naked eyes as Dorgan did with his glass. The steamship was creeping up on us gradually but it was apparent that she was proceeding only at loafing speed. As her course lay she was headed to pass us to leeward at a distance of perhaps half a mile. But at the rate she was steaming I thought some considerable time would elapse before we should have her abeam of us.

With Israel Brill's remark about her top works to prompt me I studied her as well as I could, shading my eyes from the glare of the sun upon the water. It was plain that she was not a passenger ship of any type that I was familiar with; she was too low in the water and as Brill had said there was a total absence of top works such as a modern passenger ship carries. Also, if the distance wasn't deceiving me, I thought she was too small to be a liner.

It is odd that the truth didn't occur to me at this time, but it didn't. While I was still straining my eyes to get a better view

of the white boat a smell of raw gasoline came up through the open hatchway in which I was sitting and I swung down to find that the leak had started again and was this time beyond curing by any temporary tinkering. That being the case and the safety of the schooner being an essential part of my double-headed plan for vengeance and escape I set to work to make the needed repair in a workmanlike manner and was so long about it that the next time I climbed to the ladder head the noon-day sun was blazing pretty nearly overhead and the short-sleeved undershirt which was the only body garment I had kept on while working in the hot hold was more than I needed.

Coming so suddenly out of the gloomy underdepths into the glaring sunshine it was perhaps half a minute before I could wink the dazzling blindness out of my eyes. Blurringly I saw that the smaller of the two Minorcans was still at the wheel and that Dorgan was pacing a slow sentry go up and down the weather side of the deck.

As the perspective cleared I looked astern to find the white steamship. It had disappeared as completely as if the sea had swallowed it. For a moment I did not understand what had happened. Then I crouched to look to leeward under the boom of the half-winged mainsail. As the schooner lifted on a swell the vista to port and forward widened and I had a nerve-tingling shock that nearly made me lose my hold upon the hatchway coaming and tumble into the hold. At a distance that I judged to be something less than a half mile, and steaming slowly on her course, was the white vessel with the curious lack of top hamper. The one chance in a thousand had tipped the beam. She was the Carter yacht—the *Waikiki*!

I knew then that my time was upon me—and it had come some hours too soon. Briefly, the plot I had so laboriously concocted during the waking hours of the night, and had perfected later, after Dorgan had told me where the schooner was and where she was going to be, was this: with the coming of darkness I would watch for my chance of slipping into the deck-house cabin while both of the bullies were on deck and rummaging for arms, which I made no doubt I should find on board of a vessel given over to the risky business of liquor smuggling. With a pistol or a rifle I could and

would bring Dorgan and Brill to terms. Since the schooner would then be off Key West it would by the same token be off Havana where, as I had prefigured, the *Waikiki* would already be berthed. And when I had gotten the whip hand of them I meant to make my captors change their course and land me at the Cuban city—to force them to do it at the point of a gun.

But the sight of the *Waikiki* steaming along almost within hailing distance fired a train of determination that blew the more prudent plan to shreds. Alison, in trouble and depending—or so she had said—upon me, was in that near-by ship. And there, if the might of a single pair of hands could bring it to pass, I should presently be, too, and that before the slipping chance should escape.

Taking it for granted that Brill was still asleep in the cabin I stole a look at the steersman. What I meant to do would be done only if he failed to give the alarm, since he was facing me and could mark every move I should make. A hand waved at him when Dorgan's back was turned brought a nod and a smile. That was enough. Anxiously I watched the giant, expecting to see him turn at the forward end of the deck house and come pacing aft again. But he did not. Instead he kept on going forward, stopping only when he reached the foremast from which point he could stare across at the *Waikiki* under the after-leach of the schooner's bellying stay-sail.

This was my chance and I caught at it. The companion slide was open and the padlock was hanging in its hasp. Bounding up I closed the slide noiselessly and snapped the lock. That disposed of Brill for the time being. With a quick glance back at the little steersman—a glance that assured me that I had nothing to fear from him—I crouched under the lee of the deck house and waited for Dorgan to come aft.

CHAPTER IV.

A STERN CHASE.

As the event proved I hadn't long to wait. After he had stared a minute or so at the white yacht Dorgan came tramping aft again. Oddly enough, as I thought, he did not see me, though he might have easily if he had looked across to where I was crouching at the corner of the deck house as he

passed on the weather side. And neither, it appeared, did he notice that the companion slide was closed.

I let him get well beyond the line of the binnacle and the wheel before I ran across to take a stand near the weather rail, having no mind to give him the advantage of the inclination of the deck as the schooner heeled to leeward. Now that I was inviting the unequal battle I would have given much for a weapon of some sort, any sort, and would have thought it no disgrace to use it against such a man mountain as the huge liquor smuggler. But there was nothing save the belaying pins in their racks on either rail and they were too far aft to be reached in time.

For the time was mighty short. I had scarcely found my footing before the giant turned and saw me; saw too that I was waiting for him, I guess, for he charged like a mad bull, hugging the rail so that if I should dodge I'd be forced to give him the slant of the deck. I did give it to him as he closed in but only to duck under his outstretched arms and come up behind him, handing him a right and left in the short ribs as I passed. With a volley of oaths and with an alertness surprising in such a hulk of a man he spun around to face me again and again tried to rush me. But now I had more room to maneuver in and merely slipped aside, getting under his guard a second time with a couple of the short-arm body jabs. And with that the battle, the real battle, was on in deadly earnest.

Without being in any enthusiastic sense a sport fan in college I had been sufficiently interested in athletics to go in moderately for wrestling and boxing and in my senior year the college had been blessed with an under coach who knew ring fighting from the bottom up and was willing to impart his knowledge to any of the men who cared to stand up to him on the chalked canvas. From this shrewd and hard-hitting mentor I had learned two things above all others; one was never to let it come to a clinch with a bigger man and the other to seek to match overpowering weight with cleverness and agility.

A hot little flurry of give and take showed me that Dorgan had no "science;" no knowledge of the boxing game on its skillful side. His tremendous bulk and strength were his chief stock in trade. He knew very

well that if he could once get his hands on me it would be all over but the bone cracking; but so did I. So I contented myself with playing him like a hooked fish, giving ground when he rushed, getting in a blow when I could and slipping away before he could recover. The chief disadvantages were the slant of the deck and the contracted space between the obstructing deck house and the binnacle stand and the wheel. If he should succeed in cornering me I knew I was gone.

In the warm work of the next two or three minutes I had half a dozen narrow escapes from the cornering. I soon found that I could hit him when and where I chose but I couldn't stop his bull-like rushes. When he got his enormous weight in motion nothing short of a stone wall would have stopped it. Under such conditions the fight speedily developed into a battle of endurance. Around and about in the narrow ring of the schooner's after deck it surged and shifted. Twice the big brute got a hamlike hand on my shoulder but the flimsy undershirt gave him no hold and both times the failure to force a clinch gave me a chance to hammer him viciously while his guard was down.

As any one who has ever put on the gloves will know, a round in which the fighting is pressed to the limit cannot last indefinitely without a breathing space. When the fight began, I thought or hoped that I could outlast him if I saved myself all I could and let him work hard enough. But his furious rushes kept on endlessly and he was still making them after my breath was coming in heartbreaking gasps and my footwork was beginning to grow uncertain. Once and once again I slipped just as he was crowding me against the lee rail and a moment later I escaped only by leaping backward over the corner of the deck house. Breathlessly I knew it must come to a decision before long and in the feinting and dodging I battered away desperately, breaking over and under the guard which he was now scarcely making any effort to maintain.

Through all this frenzied mêlée the Minorcan at the wheel had kept his place unmoved and his shipmate forward had come aft only far enough to get a near-hand view of what was going on. But now I saw out of the corner of my eye that this second man was closing in and I caught a flash of the sun upon bright steel. The fel-

low had his knife out. Was he going to use it upon me or upon Dorgan? Above the volcanic eruption of curses that Dorgan was pouring out I heard the shrill voice of the man at the wheel answering my unworded question: "*No se moleste, señor!* Pedro will cut ze hear-rt out of heem!"

That put an entirely new face upon things. I didn't care to be a party to a butchery, even of so hardened a brute as the big bootlegger. Waving the knife man back I let Dorgan push me aft past the wheel and so out of the only space big enough to afford room to play in. The bully, thinking he had me cornered at last, gave a yell of triumph and closed in. But his triumph was short lived. As he grabbed me and I could feel his hot breath upon my face I snatched one of the iron pipe belaying pins from its rack; a weapon I had been coveting from the beginning of the fight but which had hitherto been out of reach. That settled it. The first swinging blow crippled his guarding arm, and the next crashing down upon his unprotected head laid him out.

By this time, of course, Brill was awake and up and battering at the locked companion slide but I let him batter while I leaned against the rail and got my breath. When I had enough of it to enable me to talk I turned to the sailor at the wheel.

"I'm captain of this ship now!" I panted. "Are you and your partner with me?"

"*Sí, señor,*" he replied just as calmly as that; and then he added: "Too mooch damn-damn."

"All right. You see that ship out ahead: You steer so as to catch her if you can. Do you understand?"

"*Sí, señor.*"

Beckoning the other man, who apparently had no English, to come and help me I knelt beside Dorgan to find out whether or not I had killed him outright. He wasn't dead—for which I was duly thankful—but he was out of the fight permanently. The two bones of his left forearm were broken and while the second blow with the iron belaying pin hadn't quite cracked his skull, so far as I could determine in a hasty examination, there was little doubt that it would be some time before the wound would give him leave to ask what had happened to him.

I suppose it would have been only humane to have attended to the enemy's hurts before doing anything else; but Brill was still hammering at the companion slide and

it seemed the part of prudence to bring the little war to a definite conclusion without any more loss of time. The *Waikiki* was gradually increasing her lead and if we were to overtake her, Brill, who was now the only man aboard of us who knew what the schooner could be made to do, must be persuaded to take his trick at the wheel.

Catching up the trusty belaying pin I stood aside and motioned to Pedro to open the slide. When he did so the fat-faced skipper popped up like a jack-in-the-box with a revolver in each hand, sweat streaming, and his red hair on end, not so much from belligerence, I thought, as from fright. When he saw Dorgan, bloody-headed and apparently dead, lying on the deck at his feet he pulled both triggers wildly, hitting nothing, of course, but the circumambient air. There were two of us to seize and disarm him and we did it promptly.

"Wot in 'ell's all this?" he yelped when we had him covered with his own weapons.

"Mutiny on the high seas," I told him shortly. "I'm in command of this hooker now and if there is to be any drowning match pulled off, as you and Dorgan planned a few hours ago, you're the one who will go over the side—not I."

That fetched him. "You—you'd murder me?" he wheezed cravenly.

"Just as certainly as you would have murdered me. Only you've got it coming to you and I haven't."

At that I was given to see that my estimate of his courage, or rather of his lack of it, was fully justified. Before I knew what he was about he had fallen on his marrow bones and was begging like a dog. Life, life upon any terms was all he craved and his ravings were so mixed up with bubbling oaths as to be almost farcial.

"Get up!" I ordered. "You make me sick! Your partner did have sand enough to stand up to it until he was knocked out, but you haven't the nerve of a jellyfish! You say you want to live: you've got just one chance for it. If you can make this windjammer catch up with that yacht out ahead and put me aboard of her, you live. Otherwise you walk the plank in good old pirate style!"

He caught at the condition like a drowning man catching at a flung life line.

"I—I'll put you aboard of that smoke boat or sail the masts out o' this hooker," he gasped stumbling aft to take the wheel.

Then he burst out in a torrent of profanity at the two sailors, the imprecations being the embroidery of an order to set the gaff topsails. But I stopped that in a hurry—the cursing, I mean.

"Cut that out—cut it all out!" I said. "You forget that these men are no longer your serfs; they're your masters." Then to the two Minorcans: "Do what he tells you to but kick him if he swears at you."

While the two sailors were setting the topsails I slit the sleeve on Dorgan's broken arm and examined the fracture, keeping an eye on Brill meanwhile and also keeping one of the captured pistols within easy reach. As nearly as I could tell by feeling, the arm fracture was simple; the bones were not splintered. My experience as a boss in various construction camps remote from civilization had given me some knowledge of rough-and-ready surgery so I proceeded to set the bones as well as I could, whittling splints of kindling wood from the galley with Dorgan's own clasp knife and cutting up a piece of sailcloth for bandages. For the scalp wound I could do nothing better than to wash it with sea water; since Brill at my questioning said that the schooner carried no medicine chest, not even a bottle of iodine.

While I was working over the fallen giant the topsails were hoisted and the schooner, heeling to their draft, began to forge ahead at a gratifying increase of speed. During the fight and its mopping-up aftermath the *Waikiki* had increased her lead to possibly a mile. Now that I had time in which to weigh and measure the probabilities I wondered if by any unlucky chance Jeffreys had recognized the *Vesta* in passing. If he had, any attempt we might make to overtake the yacht was foredoomed to failure.

I knew from having sailed in her that the *Waikiki* could leave us as the bullet leaves the gun if she were put to speed. But after I had done what I could for Dorgan, and went to focus the binocular upon the vessel ahead, I was confident that as yet no full-speed order had been sent down to her engine room. She was still loafing easily over the long swells and with the glass, which was a good one, I could make out the figures of the people on her after-deck lounge though of course I could not recognize them.

As soon as the Minorcans were free to help me, we three got Dorgan down into

the cabin and spread him out in one of the bunks; not however until I had first made sure of Israel Brill by anchoring him to the wheel standard with a lashing of rope yarn around his legs. Having disposed of Dorgan, I left Brill tied while I took an inventory of the capture, overhauling the galley stores to see what we had in the way of provisions and sounding the gasoline tank to find out how we were supplied in the matter of engine fuel. In both respects the schooner was fairly well found. There was food enough in tins to last us a week or more and the gas tank, which was a large one, was still more than half full.

Next I made another trip to the cabin and rummaged for arms, making no doubt that a rum smuggler would carry something more than the pair of rusty army revolvers we had taken from Brill. The guess was confirmed. In one of the lockers I found four service rifles and another pair of army pistols, with a box of ammunition. To be on the safe side I removed this arsenal from its place in the locker, carrying it forward into the main hold and hiding it among the liquor cases.

Going on deck again I took another look at the yacht with the glass. Though, to my landsman's eye, the added topsails had increased our speed fully one half, the relative positions of the two vessels seemed unchanged. As nearly as I could judge we hadn't gained a foot in the race; this, too, with the wind coming still fresher than before out of the northeast. Turning upon Brill I asked him if he didn't have some more canvas that he could put upon the schooner.

"More sail?" he gurgled. "Wot in 'ell's the matter with you? She's got every stitch she can stagger under right now! If we'd get a capful more o' this wind she'd go on her beam ends as sure as the devil's a hog!" Then, in shrill terror: "Have a heart, man, and take these here-lashin's off my feet! If she was to go over I'd be drowned like a rat in a trap!"

I untied him at his plea, saying it would be small loss to the world if he and all his tribe were drowned out of hand. At the same time I told him plainly what would happen if he took advantage of the unmanacled.

"One bad break on your part and you pass out," I said, touching the pistol which I had thrust into my belt. "I don't partic-

ularly want to kill you in cold blood but if you pull it down on yourself you'll get it. And I might add that I can shoot straighter than you did when we let you come on deck."

At this he made voluble protest as to his good intentions and I was obliged to admit that he seemed to be doing his best to overtake the yacht; though this was possibly only because the overtaking promised to rid him of me. He was a skillful sailor; I'll say that much for him. There was little question but that the schooner was carrying more sail than was at all prudent in a wind which was now beginning to pick up a few whitecaps; when the gusts came her lee scuppers ran full. But Brill was holding her to it grimly, easing the helm only when it seemed inevitable that she would capsize if he didn't.

It is a well-worn nautical maxim that a stern chase is a long chase. After an hour or more, during which time a choppy sea had risen to make the schooner thrash and pound and her masts to bend like whipstocks, Brill shouted to me that the topsails had to come off or we'd have the sticks out of her. Accordingly Pedro and José manned the downhauls and the dangerous canvas was taken in. By this time the wind had freshened to a half gale and a little later we had to reef both the fore and the mainsail, in which operation I lent a hand with the Minorcans while Brill held the schooner in the wind to bring the booms inboard.

Even under the reduced canvas we flew along, as it seemed to me, at undiminished speed, but try as we might we could not reduce the distance between us and the *Waikiki*. After a time it occurred to me that Jeffreys might be playing with us; that he might after all have recognized the *Vesta* in passing and have given his sailing master orders to tail us along but not to let us overtake the yacht. I couldn't conceive of any reason which he might have for doing such a thing but there seemed to be no other way of accounting for the unvarying distance between the two vessels when we were now sailing two miles to one we had been making when the chase began.

More than half convinced that this was the explanation of our inability to come up to the yacht I settled down to a grim determination to hang on and at least keep the *Waikiki* in sight, if possible, and so to follow her into her port. Up to this time I had

had no reason to doubt that the port would be Havana; Alison had said Havana and so had the Sefton girl. But now a disturbing question of doubt was arising. It was past mid-afternoon and Dorgan had said that we would be off Key West by nightfall. In rummaging for arms in the cabin I had come across a roll of dingy charts and I went below to get it, taking a look at Dorgan while I was in the cabin. He was breathing regularly but was still locked in a stupor from the effects of the head wound. Going back to Brill at the wheel I showed him the chart covering the strait.

"Whereabouts are we?" I asked.

With a grimy forefinger he indicated our probable position; at a point about one third of the distance from the Keys to Cuba and about the same distance southeast of Key West. When he did that I glanced at the compass bearing in the binnacle. Our course was precisely what it had been all day; a few points to the south of due west.

"We're following that yacht," I said.

"Where is she heading for?"

"You tell, if you know," he returned; adding: "I'm damned if I do."

"Key West?" I queried.

He shook his head. "She'd be bearin' up more to the north if she was headin' for the Key."

"Havana, then?"

"Not in a million years. Havana ain't such a mighty sight off o' due south fr'm where we're at now. If she holds the course she's been steerin' all day the first landfall she'll make'll be the coast o' Mexico, somewheres along about Tampico."

Here was a mystery a mile wide. What had happened in two days to change the plans of the yacht party? If Alison could only have told me a little more—but she hadn't—couldn't. I was left completely in the dark. But there was only one thing to do, as I saw it. If the *Waikiki* was to go on steaming out into the Gulf of Mexico bound for some port unknown we were going to keep her in sight as long as we could. There was neither rhyme nor reason in such a determination but I was in no frame of mind to listen to reason.

"You, and Dorgan too, if he ever comes to his senses again, are due to be mighty sorry that you took a stranger's money to shanghai another stranger," I said to Brill. "We are going to overtake that yacht before we quit if we have to chase her to

Panama and back. That's what you've let yourselves in for, if you care to know."

"But, lookee here!" he babbled; "we ain't 'found' for no such v'yage as that! There ain't scoffin' enough in the galley to feed us a week!"

"That is all right," I told him. "When the provisions give out we'll go hungry. The one thing we won't do is to quit until you've put me aboard the yacht. That goes as it lies."

Three hours later the sun dropped into the sea ahead of us and his level rays glorified for some brief seconds the shapely outline of the *Waikiki* still steaming straight into the eye of the sunset. And when darkness came we were tossing alone upon the heaving waters; alone but for the shimmer of the electric on the after deck of the distant yacht, her lights serving as our guiding beacon.

CHAPTER V.

CHAOS AND OLD NIGHT.

When it came to making preparations for the night the wind had gone down somewhat and there was a curiously oppressive heat abroad. At first I was afraid that with the decrease of our chief motive power the *Waikiki* might walk away from us and be lost in the darkness but after a couple of hours had passed with her lights neither nearer nor farther away I knew she must still be proceeding at half speed, in which case there was a chance that with good luck we might possibly be able to keep her in sight during the night.

If at that time Israel Brill was setting me down as a lunatic ripe for lacing in a strait-jacket I couldn't have blamed him much. The bare idea of chasing a fast steam yacht to an unknown destination with no better pursuer than a coasting schooner with a loose-jointed gasoline motor for an auxiliary was doubtless a lunacy of the first water; it was like trying to chase an express train with a hand car. But I was in no frame of mind to listen to the calm logic of reason. There was room in my brain for only one obsessing and inextinguishable desire—to get aboard of the *Waikiki* and explain to Alison Carter just why it was that I had failed to keep the Miami appointment with her.

With the wind moderated and the reefs shaken out of our sails I directed José to take the wheel, told him to tell Pedro to

turn in and gave Brill leave to go below. Curiously enough, as I thought, he was a bit dubious about taking the leave.

"I ain't trustin' this weatier much," he said, sniffing to windward as if he could smell a change coming. "You know anything about handlin' a windjammer?"

"Not enough to hurt," I admitted.

"Well, if it comes on to blow, you yell for me. This old hooker ain't so hellish much to look at but I don't want to lose her in a gale o' wind."

"To say nothing of the small fortune in contraband you've got under hatches in the hold," I put in.

"You said it," he returned. "I reckon that stuff's worth a heap more than what the schooner is, if you'd put it into money." Then: "What you aimin' to do with us when we lay that yacht aboard—if ever we do?"

"Nothing," I replied. "I'm no revenue officer. I'm merely making you undo what you did to me in Biscayne Bay the other night. When you've done it you may go your ways."

"Huh! That don't sound so damn' crazy, neither." Then the craven nature of the man had to come to the front: "It ain't my fault that you was cramped t'other night. I was dead set agin' it—told Jim Dorgan it was a low-down trick to play on anybody."

"Walt and say that to Dorgan's face when he gets up and can use his one good arm," I jeered; and with that I drove him below.

My watch on deck, which was kept until midnight, was entirely uneventful. Notwithstanding Brill's tentative prophecy about the weather the wind held steady out of the northeast and the schooner rode easily. The motor thumped away with little attention from me and our rate of sailing was about the average we had maintained during the day. Out ahead the shimmering glow of the *Waikiki's* lights held the same relative position, as nearly as I could judge; and she, and we, were steering the same course as at sundown—a little to the south of west. By this time I knew we must be considerably west of the Havana meridian and I was led to wonder still more pointedly why the plans of the yacht party had been changed and what the change portended.

Though José's English was strictly limited I managed to hold a bit of talk with

him now and then through the lonely hours and to learn a little of his history. Neither he nor Pedro, who was his cousin, were in any sort desperadoes. They had been fishermen in the Minorca Islands and had emigrated together to Cuba. Finding life harder there than it had been in the old country they had drifted to the United States where they had served as sailors on board a number of coasting vessels. They knew nothing about the liquor smuggling or its ethics. They had been offered a job on the *Vesta* and had taken it, asking no questions.

On my part I told the friendly little foreigner as much as I could make him understand of my own predicament, namely that I had a friend and an enemy on board of the vessel ahead of us and that I was anxious to help the friend and to do whatever was needful to the enemy. To help wear out the long watch I got him to show me a bit about steering a fore-and-aft-rigged sailing ship; and after I had the hang of it I took the wheel for a while and relieved him.

When the time came to call Brill and Pedro to take the deck I had José rout out his no-English-speaking cousin first and give him, as my interpreter, his instructions. He was to obey Brill's orders but only in matters strictly pertaining to the handling of the schooner. Apart from that he was to carry one of the pistols and keep a sharp eye upon his erstwhile skipper. If Brill should make any move toward trying to recapture his ship or to change the course I was to be summoned at once. These instructions went through all right if a series of "s's" and nods could be taken as evidence that they were understood, but Pedro balked at the pistol. When I offered him the weapon he shook his head and pulled out his sailor's knife.

"He say he not can hit nossing weth, peestol," José explained. "He say he cut keem weth knife."

I thought I was quite safe to turn in and leave the schooner in Brill's hands, and Brill in Pedro's hands. Mutiny seemed to have no terrors for the Minorcans; but as to that I doubted if either Brill or Dorgan would ever go within gunshot of a court of law to prefer charges against my allies. The bootleggers were too deep in the mud themselves to try to pull anybody else into the mire.

Brill turned out grumbling and swearing when I shook him awake and by the light of the smoky, swinging cabin lamp went to rub his eyes and stare at the barometer. "Ump!" he growled; "jus' as I thought—glass a-droppin' like a deep-sea lead. Told you afore I turned in that I smelled hell a-comin'."

"Weather?" I queried; adding: "It's bright starlight."

"That's aw right; but the glass don't lie," he retorted and with that he stumbled sleepily up the steps to take his watch on deck.

Left to myself I took the swinging lamp out of its sling and went to have a look at Dorgan. He was stirring a little and moaning in his sleep and when the light of the lamp fell upon his face he opened his eyes and licked his lips like a drunken man awakening from a debauch. "Water!" he gurgled and I put the lamp down and drew him a cupful from the cabin keg.

He gulped the drink to the final drop and let the cup fall on the floor. Groppingly he put his free hand to his head and felt the bandages.

"What hit me?" he asked thickly.

"I did," I said.

Next he felt the clumsy bundle that represented the broken arm and raised his head to try to look at it.

"Busted?" he queried.

"Both bones," I told him.

"The hell you say! Whadju do it with?"

"A belaying pin. The next time you go to sea you'd better be sure your belaying pins are made of wood instead of iron pipe."

He licked his lips again and closed his eyes. When he opened them there was a flicker of something like sardonic humor in them.

"Say; it was a helluva scrap, wasn't it? I didn't allow there was a man this side o' Dempsey that could stand up to me as long as you did. Whadju do to Isra'l Brill?"

I told him briefly and he said: "That was dead easy. Isra'l's got a streak o' yellow in him a mile wide. What you doin' with the schooner?"

"Chasing that steam yacht. When I can get aboard of her, you and Brill may take your hooker and go where you please."

"Jesso. What about the crew?"

"They are with me for the present. You and Brill have bullied them over the edge and I don't think they'll sail with either of you again."

Silence for a bit and then he said: "Of course you know what yacht that is and who's in her?"

"Yes. I imagine I know a good bit more about her and her company than you do."

"Well, it's a helluva note all round," he remarked, closing his eyes again; whereat I put the lamp back in its place and telling him to go to sleep if he could rolled into the bunk lately vacated by Brill and was dead to the world about as soon as I hit the blanket roll that served as a pillow.

I hadn't been asleep for more than a few minutes—or so it seemed, though it turned out to have been a couple of hours—before I was rudely awakened by being flung bodily out of the bunk. At first I thought Brill had taken some sort of a hitch in his courage and had attacked me but I soon found that it was the sea and the wind that were doing the attacking. The little ship seemed to be on her beam ends and the noise on deck, canvas slatting and thundering, cordage shrieking and seas crashing, was like pandemonium let loose. Above the clamor I could hear Brill bawling to me to turn out; and dazed and half drowned in a deluge of water that came pouring down the companion steps I clawed my way to the deck and closed the slide.

Pandemonium was the name for it. A squall, or in my ignorance of nautical matters I thought it was a squall, had struck us and everything was in the wildest confusion. Brill was at the wheel trying to head the schooner up into the wind and the two Minorcans were doing their best to haul in on the mainsheet to help her around. Instinctively I tailed on to the sheet with them and after a battle that threatened to take the canvas sheerly out of the bolt ropes we won. Agile as a monkey, José leaped to the halyards the moment we had the great boom inboard and let the 'sail come down on the run.

"Make fast—anyway to hold it!" Brill yelled; and after we had flung ourselves upon the sail which was still threatening to carry itself and us away and had blindly muzzled it with the slack of the halyards: "Now the fores'l! Jump for it if you want to go on livin'!"

Since it had little more than half the spread of the big mainsail we got the fore-sail down and smothered in short order, though with her head to the rising seas the *Vesta* was taking water in tons over the for-

ward bulwarks and the three of us were all but swept away half a dozen times before we could get the boom guyed amidships and the thrashing canvas subdued. How we were able to do all this in the paralyzing confusion, with the seas tumbling aboard and no light save that which was born of a sort of phosphorescent glow that came from the sea itself I can never tell. But it was done in some fashion.

Through it all I had to give Brill the credit of playing the man and the able skipper, however much he lacked of attaining the stature of a man in other respects. In the breath-catching intervals I could see him braced at the wheel, holding the schooner from falling off by sheer main strength, his stocky, shapeless body bent like a strained bow. And above the unearthly din of the elements his bellowed directions came to our ears in a steady stream of orders, each in its proper sequence and none of them, as I remembered afterward, garnished with his usual outpouring of profanity.

With the bulk of her canvas off, the schooner was meeting the mounting billows with only her head sails—staysail and jib—still spread. But these were more than she could carry if Brill should let her fall off to run before the hurricane. And to run before it was our only hope; though she was doing nobly the little ship could not rise to the curling crests which came crashing down upon her foredeck like a succession of waterspouts.

"Get them head sails off her, quick!" Brill yelled. "I can't hold her much longer!" and together we three began to struggle forward, fighting desperately for every foot of the way with the seas that were coming aboard.

Before we could reach the foremast the schooner began to fall off in spite of Brill's utmost exertions to hold her, and the slating, hammering headsails took the wind, bellying out with thunderings like the booming of guns. Being the lighter canvas the jib went first. I had a glimpse of it between gasps as it was flicked out of its bolt ropes as if by the sweep of a whirling, keen-edged sword to disappear as a white patch in the spume to leeward. As for the heavier staysail, we got it down and reefed to a mere triangular patch but only after strugglings that were fairly superhuman and drownings so heavy and prolonged that

more than once I thought the schooner was actually going down by the head and would never recover.

The instant we had finished this man-killing job Brill put the helm up, and spinning like a toe dancer under the lift of the rag of staysail we had left spread the *Vesta* whirled and raced away before the blast, taking breath-cutting leaps over the mountainous seas, climbing their backs with a rush like some frantic wild thing trying to escape and sliding down into the yawning valleys at an angle that seemed to promise certain engulfing at the bottom.

When we got back to the after deck Brill was about all in. "Rig a life line and lash me to it!" he panted; and while I didn't know what he meant, José did, and in a trice we had a line stretched from rail to rail, with a sling around Brill's body to keep him from being torn from his place at the wheel. Motionsing Pedro to take hold with him I asked him what about the motor, which was alternately racing like a windmill when the propeller kicked out of water and bringing up with a shock that threatened to tear the inwards out of the vessel when the spinning screw buried itself in a following sea.

"We need it!" he gulped. "That rag o' stays! ain't enough to give her steerage way and if she broaches we're gone! But the damn' thing's goin' to rip the inside out of her the way it's actin' now!"

I may confess frankly that it asked for a mustering up of all the nerve I had left before I could dive into the engine hold of that tossing chip on the sea mountains to do what the occasion called for; namely, to stand over the straining motor, easing it when the screw kicked out and giving it the gas again at the burying moment. There was no way of making it do this automatically; it was a plain case of handwork with the throttle—off when the propeller came to the surface; on when the next plunge gave it a grip, timing the movements with the leap and slide of the schooner over the giant seas.

I got the hang of it after a few experiments and fancied I could feel at once the easing of strain on the vessel. Though the racing speed did not slacken and the sickening climb and still more sickening descent into the trough kept on with the regularity of a pendulum swing the laboring motor no longer threatened to tear itself loose from

its bed on the keelson, so we were that much better off.

Now that I was chained to a mechanical job asking little or nothing of the brain I began to speculate anxiously upon the probable fate of the *Waikiki* in the hurricane. In the short time I had spent aboard of her at Miami I had seen nothing of her sailing master or crew, other than the cabin stewards. If she were well-officered and manned she was most likely doing just what we were doing; running before the storm; making heavy weather of it without doubt, as we were, but in no special peril if she were well handled. Hiram Carter had spared neither pains nor money to make her entirely seaworthy and I knew that she had twice crossed the Atlantic in winter storms and had thus proved herself.

Yet, we were in the midst of a raging hell of waters—and Alison was aboard of the yacht. Steadily and for years I had been telling myself that I was not in love with my childhood playmate; that Hiram Carter's money had built an impassable barrier between us for all time. But I knew now that the assurance was a lie; that she was more to me than any other woman could ever be; and the mere knowledge that she was in a vessel—no matter how staunch—exposed to all the dangers of a tropical hurricane, wrung me with the torments of a lost soul. Why hadn't Jeffreys put in at Havana as his original purpose was? What crazy notion had sent him steaming out upon an unknown sea when his ship's instruments must have told him, as ours had told Brill, that a storm was on its way?

There were no answers to these questions. The thing was done and my chance for interference, if I had ever had one, had vanished in the roaring of the blast. Morning might find the two ships, if both were afloat, a hundred miles apart, and the next time I should see Alison, if we both lived to meet again, she would be—but no; I couldn't, wouldn't think of her as Wickham Jeffreys' wife. That way lay madness incurable.

For hours that were longer than any unbroken night watch I had ever endured I stood over the throbbing motor, twitching the throttle lever first one way and then the other, keeping even time with the plunge of the schooner over the wave crest, the hissing descent into the trough and the racing climb up the next wave. Morning came

at last. I saw the first faint graying of a delayed and storm-driven dawn marking the square outline of the hatchway overhead. There was an ankle-depth of sea water surging back and forth in the small engine hold, and I coupled in the power-driven bilge pump to free it, as I had had to do many times during the night.

Though the tempest was still shrieking like a chorus of fiends in the schooner's rigging, its extreme violence seemed to be spent. The billows continued to run mountain high but their crests no longer curled and broke to throw the propeller out of water and the endless twitchings of the throttle became unnecessary. Stiff and weary, I pulled myself up the ladder, clinging limpetlike to the hatchway coaming when I got my head above the deck level. Brill, or what I thought might be his dead body, was hanging in the rope sling by which we had anchored him to the life line and José had the wheel. I crept aft and drew myself up by the binnacle post to speak to the Minorcan.

"The skipper—is he dead?" I asked.

"*No lo sé.* I t'ink he will be—how you call eet?—knock' out."

I freed Brill from the lashings and he stirred feebly, as one utterly exhausted. Even with the help he had had the job at the wheel had been a frightful one. Leaving him lying spread-eagled upon the deck I made my way to the galley forward. A fire was out of the question, of course, but in rummaging the day before I had found a few candles of solidified alcohol. With one of these I contrived to heat a kettle of water and to make a pot of strong coffee. After I had poured a little of the hot drink down Brill's throat he was able to sit up and help himself to the rest.

Shortly afterward the two of us, strange bedfellows of peril, managed to open some of the food tins and prepare breakfast of a sort, and it was Brill himself who carried a portion to José, taking the helm while the Minorcan ate. In the cabin I fed Dorgan what little he would eat. So far as I could determine he was none the worse for the half night of terror. He wanted to know if we'd lost the number of our mess in the storm and I told him we hadn't; that we were all still alive and kicking, thanks to Brill's seamanship.

"Yah," he grunted. "You'll have to hand it to Isra'l when it comes to worryin' a

windjammer through a blow. That's one place where his 'yellow' don't show none. You've lost the yacht in the raffle, I reckon?"

"I suppose so," I admitted but I added that the weather was still too thick to let us see very far.

"You'll never see her ag'in," he thrust in with a grin that the pain of his wounds turned into a ghastly grimace. "I know them white-collar yacht skippers. They ain't one, two, three when the real thing hits 'em. I'll bet my share o' the rake-off on the cargo we got in the hold that Mister Man's play-sized liner went down with all on board when that twister hit 'em last night."

And because Dorgan's gruesome prediction was the echo of a great fear that was hourly growing upon me, I climbed to the deck with a heavy heart.

CHAPTER VI.

BREAKERS AHEAD!

When I asked Brill how long the storm was likely to hold he gave me small encouragement.

"I've knowed 'em to blow like this till you'd think there wa'n't never goin' to be no let-up," he said, adding: "I ain't noticed the glass risin' any yet."

A glance at the compass showed that our course had changed completely. As we had been driving directly before the wind ever since the storm had struck us we had been obliged to go wherever we were sent; the sending now was in a southeasterly direction, which proved that the wind had shifted a full third of the way around the circle at some time during the night. Our changed course must, I thought, inevitably wreck us upon the western extremity of Cuba if we should keep on and I spoke of this to Brill.

"Needn't lose no sleep about that," was his reply. "The shift o' wind didn't come till just a little afore day and by that time I reckon we'd left Cape San Antonio a ways astern."

"In that case, what land will we make first if we keep on driving?"

"Huh!" he snorted, "your guess is as good as anybody's. The way we're headin' now we've got the hull derved Caribbean ahead of us. I do' know no more'n a goat where we're at and I won't know till I can get a chance to shoot the sun."

The whole Caribbean! I thought of the scanty provision in the galley lockers, with five men to be fed. And until the storm should abate enough to let us make sail we were completely at the mercy of the fates, compelled to go wherever the pouring blast should blow us.

Now the life of a construction engineer, as everybody knows, is never any too thickly crowded with creature comforts, but in all of my twenty-seven years I had never put in such a wretched day as this we toiled through from daybreak to dark. Though less cyclonic than it had been during the night the wind continued to blow a tremendous gale, the sea ran mountain high and the atmosphere was so thick with cloud and scud and spindrift that at no time were we able to see more than a few hundred yards in any direction.

Under such conditions life aboard our chip of a vessel was merely endurance. The man at the wheel had to be lashed at his post and though we continued to tear along at express speed under our patch of stay-sail and the kick of the motor, only eternal vigilance at the helm kept the towering following seas from broaching us. Naturally, with a total lack of nautical skill I was useless at the steering job, though time and again I offered to take a chance and relieve the three who were pretty thoroughly done in under the long strain. But Brill wouldn't trust me.

"No," was his stereotyped objection; "I reckon you've got the nerve all right, but you ain't got the 'know it.' We're right side up yet and I ain't got no notion o' lettin' a landsman drowned me at the finish."

Debarred thus from taking any useful part in the handling of the schooner I did what little else there was to be done; looked after the motor, prepared the scanty meals and served them and redressed Dorgan's scalp wound, which I was glad to note showed no signs of infection. Helpless with his broken arm and suffering, as I made no doubt, from the pain of his hurts and the pitching and tossing of the vessel which gave him no chance to relax and lie easily the big man was singularly good-natured in a grim fashion. While I was putting the clean bandages on his head he asked me what about that story of Wickham Jeffreys'—that I was in danger of going to the penitentiary.

"It was a lie cut out of the whole cloth,"

I told him. "Did you believe it at the time?"

"Well, it did sound sort o' fishy," he confessed. "Was there somethin' else back of it?"

I thought no harm could come of telling him the simple truth.

"He wants to marry the woman I want to marry and I was in his way."

"Well, now!" rumbled the giant; "ain't that hell and repeat? If you'd only told me there was a woman in it——"

"Your sandbag didn't give me a chance," I interrupted. "And if I had been allowed to tell you, you wouldn't have believed me."

"Nothin' so sure about that," he protested. "I'm kinda mushy when you work the woman racket on me. She was in the yacht with that smooth-talkin' double crosser?"

"It is her father's yacht," I explained. "She is one of the party on board."

"Huh! I don't blame you none for raisin' merry hell a-tryin' to get back to where you belonged. Too bad she's drowned. I reckon it'd 'a' been some comfort if you could 'a' drowned along with her."

"You seem to be mighty confident that the yacht hasn't outlived the storm."

"Yacht may be all right but I know them white-collar skippers," he said. "But I reckon it don't matter so much, after all; you'll likely be drowned on the same day o' the month with her, anyhow."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Isra'l says this here storm's one o' them circulars and he's scared we're a-workin' to'ards the center of it. If so be we are, you can tell all the home folks good-by. The old hooker'll never live past the shift o' wind that comes when you hit the suck hole of a twister."

Landsman as I was I knew that Dorgan wasn't drawing upon his imagination in predicting the almost certain fate of a ship drawn into the vortex of a circular hurricane. Was that to be the end of us? I wondered. And when I thought of the fate which Dorgan had so confidently measured out to the *Waikiki* and her company I was not so deeply moved over the prospect for the *Vesta* as I might otherwise have been.

When night fell—it was only a change from twilight to full darkness, as you might say—the gale was still at its height and from all appearances we were in for another

night of peril. By this time the terrific pitching and tossing had become a keen agony to all of us; more, since the *Vesta* was by no means a new vessel, her seams were opening badly under the continued racking. All during the afternoon I had been forced to run the bilge pump at intervals to keep the leakage down and I remarked with increasing concern that the intervals grew shorter toward night.

This meant that I had my night's work cut out for me in the engine hold if the schooner was to be kept from foundering, but before attacking it I took Dorgan's supper down to him and tried to make him as comfortable for the night as the conditions would admit. As I was leaving him he called me back and thrusting his good arm under his blanket pillow drew out a sailor's ditty bag and gave it to me.

"If you come alive out o' this and I don't—and you stand a heap better chance than what I do—there's a li'" woman up in Jacksonville that belongs to me; you can find her by askin' for Tom Beasley, Clyde Line dock. You swipe your watch and money out o' that bag, along with the yellow-back cent'ry his nobs paid me for kidnapin' you, and give what's left to the li'" woman. It's all I got."

I don't believe I'm any too soft-hearted and Dorgan's treatment of me before his beating had not been calculated to make me love him. But the finding of this streak of sheer humanity in him got me.

"Dorgan," I said, "you're not altogether the brute I've been taking you for, after all. I owe you an apology because I've been thinking you were. Be sure that I'll do what you ask—if I should live and you don't. And the hide goes with the horns; the little woman you speak of gets the hundred-dollar bribe with the rest of your estate."

"That's right white of you; I'm damned if it ain't," he said simply; and with that he turned his face to the wall and I went to tackle the all-night pumping job in the engine hold.

There was a good six-inch depth of water sloshing back and forth in the machinery den when I dropped into it and a little longer delay on my part would have put the motor out of commission. I started the pump at once but it was a long time before I could tell whether or not it was gaining anything on the leaks. Perched on the

cracker box I got a little sleep now and again but it was a long night and a trying one. Having to stick grimly to my post I was obliged to leave the deck to Brill and the Minorcans; but while I didn't trust Brill at all I thought I could depend upon my two allies to hold him harmless if he should try to regain the upper hand.

Along toward morning the pitching and tossing grew less violent and I began to hope that the worst was over. Anxiously I watched the open hatchway to catch the first glimmerings of dawn but I missed them after all, for I was sound asleep on my perch when Brill's shout, calling me to turn out, aroused me. Startled by the note of fear in his voice I sprang up, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes. The new day was come; there was blue sky overhead and the sun was shining.

But there was another shock of surprise lying in wait for me when I tumbled up the ladder. Brill was at the wheel, the wind had subsided to half a gale and though the waves were still running high the schooner was laboring less heavily. Yet it seemed that we had escaped foundering at sea only to be wrecked at last. Dead ahead and so near that the thunder of the breakers upon an outer reef beat upon the ear like the booming of cannon there was land. Though Brill was doing his best to claw off with the help of the patch of staysail it was evident that the wind, the seas and a strong tidal current were driving us helplessly upon the reef.

This was why Brill had yelled to me. Pedro and José were fighting desperately with the water-soaked lashings of the furled foresail and I understood at once that if we were to have any chance at all to save the schooner it would only be by making sail and making it mighty quickly. In the pitching surges the motor was barely giving us weak steerage way.

In the hot work of the next few minutes my heart was in my mouth. At every lift of the ship I expected her to come crashing down upon the reef. Working like fiends we three finally contrived to cast off the wet lashings of the foresail and to hoist and sheet it home. With this additional canvas spread, Israel Brill proved that even the paltriest villain may have some redeeming qualities. With a quick spin of the wheel that brought the schooner up when she was within half a length of the breakers

he averted the catastrophe for the moment, at least. But this was only a stop-gap that served to lay us broadside on to the rocks.

"Head sails!" Brill yelled. "Shake the reefs out o' that stays! Jump to it for your lives!"

We jumped and after a breathless tussle with wet and swollen ropes the staysail was hoisted. Brill put the helm hard up and I fell into the engine hold to speed the motor to its limit, climbing out again immediately to lend a hand with the wheel. But in spite of all our efforts the schooner continued to edge in toward the crash. Doing his best Brill could only hold her on a course roughly paralleling the reef and we all saw that it needed nothing but the urge of an extra heavy sea to send us to our finish.

It was then that I remembered Dorgan lying crippled in his berth between decks. Shouting to José to come and take my place as an extra hand at the wheel I dashed down into the stuffy little dog kennel of a cabin. Dorgan was sitting on the edge of the bunk, blinking dizzily from the effort of getting up. He knew something was wrong but was too bewildered to realize what it was.

"All hands on deck!" I shouted. "We're about to go on the rocks!"

"I reckoned it was something like that," he muttered and with my help he got upon his feet. Half leading, half carrying him I got him up the companion steps. There were half a dozen life belts on the ship but they were all rotten and frayed and ready to drop to pieces. I picked out the best one and tied it around him as he sat on the deck with his back braced against the deck house and he gave me a grateful look like that of a dog out of whose paw you have just pulled a festering thorn, saying: "You're the first white man I've knowed in a month o' Sundays; you look out for yourself and that li' poke I give you and never mind me."

As he spoke the big seventh wave we had all been watching for came surging in froth topped and mountain high from windward. I had a fleeting glimpse of Pedro wrapping legs and arms around the weather shrouds of the mainmast for an anchorage against the shock, of Brill shoving José away from the wheel and bending his thick body to spin the spokes, of the schooner rising on the huge billow to turn slowly

head on to the reef as Brill put the helm hard down, and then—

The expected crash did not come. Instead, there was a long, scraping grind as the ship, lifted high on the insweeping surge, barely cleared the jagged coral, shot across the inner lagoon, buried her forefoot in the sand of a white beach and broke her bowsprit short off in collision with the palm trees that grew almost down to the water's edge. Brill had taken the only chance that offered, which was that the big sea would carry the *Vesta* completely over the breaker barrier. And it had.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ENCHANTED ISLE.

When the *Vesta* shot across the comparatively quiet lagoon and came to rest with the slow shock of her grounding upon the shelving beach I think we were all more or less dazed by the sudden and un hoped-for escape from a shipwreck which would doubtless have blotted all five of us out, since the huge seas pounding on the reef would speedily have beaten the life out of the strongest swimmer.

Yet, as it presently appeared, we had missed the shipwreck on the reef only to lose the schooner in another way. Though I had jumped into the engine pit the instant we were over the barrier, and Pedro and José, yelled at by Brill, had let the foresail come down on the run our headway could not be checked quickly enough; and though Brill had spun the wheel fiercely he had only contrived to hit the land quartering and we were beached hard and fast with every sea that came over the reef ramming us still deeper into the sand.

Not to miss a chance while the seas were still sweeping in strongly enough to lift the schooner's stern we put the motor in the reverse and tried to back off. But in a few minutes Brill shouted down to me that it was no good and I stopped the motor and climbed to the deck. Brill, forgetting that but for the Providential "seventh" wave he might have joined the rest of us in providing food for the fishes, was exploding in blasphemies so horrible as to make even Dorgan call him down.

"Shut up, you cockroach!" he roared. "Ain't it enough that you've still got the breath o' life in you? Usin' it to cuss the good God that let you keep it ain't goin' to get you nowhere!"

Brill quieted down at that and presently climbed over the stranded bow with me to see how badly we were hooked up. A very cursory examination seemed to prove that the schooner was likely to stay right where she was until she rotted. Fully a fourth of her keel was bedded in the sand and my own conclusion was that nothing short of the power of the biggest wrecking tug afloat would ever pull her into deep water.

"We're high and dry," I told Dorgan when we had climbed aboard again; then I asked Brill if he had any notion as to where we were—what land we'd made. His response was a mere guess that anybody might have thrown out; that we'd been blown upon one of the many small islands or keys with which the map of the Caribbean is dotted. Asked if these keys were inhabited he said that some of them were and others were not, adding with more of the morose cursings that it had probably been our luck to hit upon one of the uninhabited ones.

To prove or disprove this appeared to me to be the first matter of importance. Our food supply would be exhausted in three or four days at the most. If the island were inhabited we could live; if it were not—well in that case we should at least know what we were up against. Accordingly I detailed Pedro to stay in the schooner with Dorgan and took Brill and José with me on an exploring expedition.

As a means of acquiring any definite information about our landfall the tramp ashore was a conspicuous failure. Taking the northeastern beach first we came at a distance of perhaps half a mile from the schooner to a place where the outer reef drew in so close to the mainland as scarcely to break the huge seas which were still tumbling in. At this point and for as far as we could see beyond it the great billows were pounding upon the island beach, each one carrying a miniature tidal wave far up into the jungle. Clearly there was no thoroughfare here and after two or three half-hearted attempts to penetrate the dense tropical growth inland we turned back and tried the opposite direction.

With the exception that the cul-de-sac was somewhat farther away from our stranded ship conditions to the southwest were much the same as we had found them in the other direction. Though the barrier reef preserved its distance it was so nearly

submerged that the seas broke entirely over it. Hence our exploration was cut short as before and for the same reason. This time we made another and more determined effort to penetrate to the interior of the island; did so penetrate for perhaps half a mile and then gave it up and worked our way laboriously back to the beach through thicketings as dense as a quick-set hedge. We saw no signs of human occupation in all this wandering and I doubted much if we should find any, even after the sea should go down and give us leave to circle the island by way of the beach path.

For the remainder of that day we did nothing because there was nothing much that we could do. At Dorgan's suggestion we set a distress signal flying from the schooner's mainmast and as long as daylight lasted one or another of us was constantly sweeping our half of the horizon on the chance of sighting a passing ship. But nothing came of this.

By sunset the sea had gone down and the wind, which had blown freshly out of the northwest all day, began to die away, dropping to a dead calm shortly after dark to usher in a night of sweltering heat. Like the salamanders they were Dorgan and Brill elected to sleep in the cabin bunks and the Minorcans, European-peasantwise, shut themselves in the dog hole of a forecastle. I said the sky was all the cover I needed in such torrid weather, so spreading my blankets on the after deck and with a coil of the mainsheet for a pillow I prepared to get what sleep might be had under the double handicap of the heat and a dense cloud of voracious mosquitoes.

It was the mosquitoes that led to a discovery which banished all thoughts of sleep, for the time being at least. After I had fought the stinging pests for a while I sat up with my back against the rail and tried, with the result of half stifling myself, to make a mosquito curtain out of a fold of the blanket. Failing in this I remembered that engine oil used as an ointment was something of a deterrent and got up to grope my way to the hatch of the engine hold. In the act I was brought to face the dark mass of the forest into which the *Vesta* had thrust her bowsprit. Over the tops of the trees which marked a line scarcely distinguishable between the forest shadow and the black bowl of the sky shutting down upon it I saw a faint red glow.

For a moment I thought it might be the rising moon and then I remembered that it was now the dark of the moon. But if it wasn't the moon it must be a fire—and a fire meant inhabitants. Without waking any of the others I crept to the bow of the schooner, dropped to the ground and began to worm my way into the heart of the jungle thicket.

This forest treading in the dark proved to be a man-size job, right from the start. What I don't know about tropical plants and trees, as to their names and such, would fill a shelf in a library; but I can testify that I met and wrestled with at least a hundred varieties of vegetable obstacles in the next half hour, from invisible trees that took advantage of the black darkness to get squarely in the way to thorny ground palms that bayoneted me in passing and tangles of vine and brier that caught and tripped me at every step. But whenever there were openings in the dense foliage ahead I could get fresh glimpses of the faint red glow, so I pushed on.

In the course of time the lapping of little seas on a beach could be heard and then I knew I must be nearing the other side of the island. A little later I came out suddenly, not upon the sands of a beach as I had been expecting to, but upon the edge of a small glade or natural clearing open to the sea on one side and surrounded by the jungle on the other three. On the seaward side of the glade a fire was burning and a little way removed from it there were rude shelters, three of them, that looked in the firelight as if they might have been hastily built out of tree branches and palm fronds.

Around the fire there were figures of men, some of them stretched out as if asleep, others sitting up and nursing their knees. Counting, I made seven of these figures and under the rude shelters there were others dimly describable by the glow of the fire; these all recumbent as sleepers.

Naturally my first impulse was to cross to the fire and make my presence known to the men about it. But while I hesitated the singularity of this camp in the glade had time to make itself felt. Who were these people—the fire makers and shelter builders? Not natives, I decided at once. In all the surroundings there was no hint of permanent habitations or cultivated land. But if they were not islanders, who were they?

I don't know whether it was a prompting

of caution or a mere prudent desire to learn more about them before making my presence known that led me to skirt the glade toward the shore to obtain a better point of view. But I did it and then the wonderful thing happened. I had barely shown myself, I suppose as a dark shape emerging cautiously from the thicket, when a figure in white sprang up from the sands almost at my feet, gave a frightened little shriek and started to run.

I think it must have been my good angel that let one of the tangling brier vines follow me out of the thicket to trip and send me stumbling on the beach directly in the path of the flying figure in white. At any rate we collided squarely and came down together in the soft sand, I with my arms around the woman and my mouth full of apologies for the awkward stumbling.

It was the apologies that saved me. As I was struggling to my feet and explaining volubly that the collision was the result of the sheerest accident the unknown sharer in the accident flung her arms about my neck, and a voice that I would have known if I had heard it in heaven or hell said:

"Oh, Dick, Dick! Is it—*can* it be you?"

"*Alison!*" I gasped. "Of all the unbelievable things——"

"It's a miracle," she said solemnly; "a heavenly miracle, Dick. Don't you know, I've been sitting here for a long time just wondering if it wouldn't be best to walk out into the water and—and make myself forget that I know how to swim and—and just end it all?"

"For Heaven's sake!" I stammered; "what under the sun has happened?"

She turned to face away from the glade and slipped an arm in mine.

"Let's walk a little way along the beach and I'll tell you—all I can. But first tell me how you come to be here."

As we walked slowly away and out of sight of the camp fire I told her briefly of the shanghai outrage in Biscayne Bay on the night of the dinner in the *Waikiki* and its later outcome. When I had finished she was shuddering as if with a chill.

"What an unspeakable villain Wickham is!" she exclaimed. "If I had known that night at dinner what I know now—but I couldn't even imagine it."

By this time I thought we were far enough from the camp in the glade to be free from any danger of interruption.

"Suppose we sit down and thrash it out?" I suggested. "The sand is dry."

For a moment or two after we had seated ourselves she was silent. Then she said: "What did you think of me, Dick, when you found me in that hideous lot of rotters on board the *Waikiki*?"

"It wasn't up to me to think anything. It was your father's yacht and——"

"You had a right to think anything you pleased," she broke in, "but I can explain—a little. I didn't even know who these people were until after we had left New York and were fairly at sea. Oh, of course, I knew some of them slightly—Peggy Setton, for one; but they were not in our set at all."

"I'm listening," I said.

"It's all tangled up, even now," she went on. "A month ago daddy went to Honduras to see about a contract of some sort. I wondered a little at his going, because he hasn't taken any active part in the company for a long time. For quite a while before he left I thought he seemed worried over something but he wouldn't tell me what it was."

I thought I knew that good old Hiram Carter had plenty of cause to worry if he had any inkling of the way in which the Jeffreys, father and son, were dragging the good name of the Carter Company in the mud, but I didn't say so to Alison.

"Is your father still in Honduras?" I asked.

"I am to suppose he is in Havana waiting for me. I had a letter from him about two weeks ago in which he asked me to meet him in Havana. He said that Wickham Jeffreys was going to take a party down in the yacht and that I was to join it. I thought it a little strange, at the time, that he should ask me to do that, because he knew I had been planning to go to the Bermudas with the Wellingtons. But there was a worse thing than that in his letter."

"Is it tellable?"

"To you, yes. Daddy gave me to understand that he was in some sort of business trouble that involved his good name and that the trouble would vanish if I could make up my mind to marry Wickham Jeffreys. That was all; no explanations or anything."

"Had he said anything about this before?"

"Not a single word. He knew that Wick-

ham had asked me to marry him—I had told him that. But he had never said a word to influence me, one way or the other. All he said was that he wanted me to be happy."

"Well?" I prompted.

"The *Waikiki* was lying in the Hudson and I went aboard with Hedda, my maid, one evening after dinner. Wickham was there to meet us and as he said the other members of the party wouldn't come aboard until late Hedda and I went to our state-room and went to bed. In the morning we were at sea and I found out what I was in for."

"It sounded only a little less high-handed than my own kidnaping by Dorgan and Brill but I did not interrupt.

"I saw it was going to be the most disagreeable trip I had ever made but I thought I could shut my eyes and ears and stand it for the few days it would take us to reach Havana and daddy."

"And then?"

"Then Wickham began on me—at the first breakfast table. Without saying it outright he practically told them all that we were—that we were engaged. I couldn't deny it—to that crowd—but I did tell Wickham what I thought of him when I had the chance. Then, Dick, if you'll believe it, he began to threaten! He said daddy—my daddy!—was in trouble, serious trouble, and that it might end in prison. Then he went on to say that his father was the only one that could save the situation but there was so much ill-feeling that he—Wickham—despaired of persuading his father to intervene."

"All lies," I broke in, taking a shot in the dark but with complete assurance that it would hit the mark.

"Of course I tried to think so; it was too horrible to think otherwise. But I was alone in that wretched mob of drink maniacs. Wickham kept harping on the one string continually. If we were once married it would straighten out everything. His father couldn't go to extremes, as he was meaning to, if it became a family matter—things like that. I couldn't do anything but fight for time. I told myself that the voyage couldn't last forever and that I'd see daddy in Havana and find out just how much of all this that Wickham was saying was true. Then I thought of you. I was sure you knew all about the affairs of the

company and that you were somewhere near Miami and I knew that Wickham didn't know you were there. He'd been telling everybody that you were in Peru."

Truly, I did know some things about the inner affairs of the big contracting company and I suspected a lot more. Ever since Hiram Carter had withdrawn from the active business management there had been crookedness to burn. And the two Jeffreys were at the heart of the whole disreputable business. But it didn't seem needful, just at the moment, to tell her the things that I knew and the many more that I suspected.

"Did Wickham finally persuade you?" I asked.

"No."

"Most of your friends—your rich friends—would call it a good match. And if it were to save your father's good name—"

"Even then, I'm afraid I couldn't."

"Is it because you dislike Jeffreys?"

"I don't dislike him—that isn't the word. I—"

"Is there some other man? Don't tell me if you don't want to."

Silence for a little space and then with the old straightforwardness that had always made me love her: "I don't know of any reason why I shouldn't tell you, Dick. Yes; there is another man."

"Ah!" said I. "That makes a difference. Do I know the other man?"

"I—I think not. But we can leave him out. He doesn't care for me and I am sure he doesn't know that I care for him. I said I don't dislike Wickham and I don't—I hate him!"

Again there was a silence. From where we were sitting on the warm beach sand I could see dimly that this side of the island was indented by a deep bay and the glare of the camp fire was in the bight of it. That there was a reef or an outer barrier of some sort on this sea front as well as the other was proved by the distant clash of breakers, quite far out it seemed, though in the darkness I couldn't see to measure distances.

As I strained my eyes and listened, the incongruities, not to call them by any stronger name, came over me with a rush. The last time I had met Alison Carter we had sat across the table from each other in the dining saloon of a richly furnished private yacht and the yacht was peacefully anchored within sight and sound of a thriv-

ing, law-abiding winter-resort city. Now, only four days later, we were sitting together on the beach of an unmarked island somewhere in the Caribbean Sea and she was telling me a story that fitted in better with some piratical romance of a past age than it did with the present.

"Suppose you begin at Miami and bring it down to date," I suggested after the silence had grown embarrassingly long.

"The *Waikiki* sailed in the afternoon of the next day. Wickham let me go ashore in the morning alone. I think he knew I had made an appointment to meet you but of course he didn't interfere—didn't need to. I waited nearly all the forenoon at the hotel but nobody had seen or heard of you. As soon as I went back the yacht sailed and I found that in my absence it had been determined to cross over to the Bahamas for a few hours' stop. I knew what that meant and I was right. We put in at Bimini just long enough to stock up with liquors for the yacht's table and smoking room. Since that time, or up to early this morning, Hedda and I have been the only sober persons on board."

"The Havana stop was cut out?"

"Postponed, Wickham said; but now I am beginning to believe that he never meant to go to Havana at all. They were all keeping something from me; I could see that plainly—and that they regarded it as a joke. It made me furious!"

"What did Jeffreys mean to do if he wasn't going to Cuba?" I asked.

"I think he meant to keep the yacht at sea until he succeeded in making me promise to marry him."

"Ah; cave-man stuff, pure and simple," I commented. Then: "Do you remember, as the *Waikiki* was steaming through the Florida Straits three days ago, she passed a schooner also headed westward?"

"We passed a number of vessels that day but I made out the name of only one."

"Do you recall the name?"

"Yes; it was *Vesta*."

"That was my ship; or rather, I should say, it became mine shortly after the *Waikiki* passed. I headed a mutiny and took the schooner away from the two bootleggers who were in command. You say you saw the name; did Jeffreys see it, too?"

"Yes; it was he who handed me the glass and told me to try if I could make out the lettering."

3A—P

"Exactly," I said. "He knew I was in that hooker and he didn't propose to have it—and me—follow and overtake him. So he gave the yacht's skipper orders to play with us a while and then to go on and lose the *Vesta*. The hurricane did the rest."

"And you say the *Vesta* is wrecked over on the other side of this island?"

"Not wrecked; beached. But she's aground hard enough to stay there until kingdom come; or until she falls to pieces."

"And those horrid men who shanghaied you?"

"I left them asleep on board the schooner when I came away; also the two Minorcan sailors who helped me in the mutiny. But tell me about the yacht. She's here, I presume?"

"Very much here, indeed. She is a wreck—out at the mouth of this bay. We had a perfectly frightful time in the hurricane. I told you that after the stop at Bimini nobody stayed entirely sober. I think that applied to Volney, our sailing master, and to the crew, as well as to the others. A lot of landlubbers couldn't have handled the yacht any worse. We couldn't tell where we were and the wireless was smashed. As nearly as I could tell we just blew wherever the storm chose to take us. It was about two o'clock in the morning of the third day when we struck."

"Heavens!" I interjected; "what an experience for you!"

"I don't ever want to have to go through another like it. I don't know how we got off. There was the most sickening confusion; no discipline or order; nobody seemed to know what to do or how to do anything. After a terrible time one of the two lifeboats was got over the side. Most of the crew crowded into it, every man fighting to save himself and paying no attention whatever to anybody else. A sea crushed that boat against the side of the yacht and I think everybody in it was drowned. Then the other was lowered and the rest of us scrambled into it and got away somehow. But when our boat was finally flung up on the beach it was smashed into kindling wood."

There was a catch in her voice as she stopped and I knew that the frightfulness of the experience was still with her. It was the rawest of tragedies; and so utterly uncalled for with a good sea boat like the *Waikiki*.

"Did the yacht sink?" I asked.

"No. We all thought she was sinking but she wasn't. She is lying out beyond this point just before us, some distance from shore—a wreck, I suppose."

"How many of you were saved?"

"All of us cabin people and seven of the crew. And a single day without food has turned us all into savages."

"Without food?" I echoed. "Do you mean to tell me there were no provisions taken in the boat?"

"Not so much as a tin of ship's biscuit. But that wasn't the worst of it—for me. Wickham Jeffreys! Oh, Dick, I can't tell you what a horrible beast he is! He says—he says I'll be glad enough to marry him when we get away from here."

For a moment the night was no longer dark for me; it was a bright red. When I could trust myself to speak I said: "When I stumbled out of the woods back yonder a little while ago, did you think I was Jeffreys?"

"I had good reason to, Dick." She shuddered. And then: "Oh, what a frightful nightmare it has been!"

As may be imagined it didn't take me long to decide definitely upon at least one thing; that was that she was never going back to that hell group in the glade. For a little space the impulse to go there myself to drag Wickham Jeffreys out by the neck and kill him was almost too strong to be put down. But I put it down with the thought that killing would be too good for him. He deserved something worse than sudden death.

"Your maid, Alison," I said. "Was she among those who were saved?"

"Yes, and she has stood by me so splendidly. This evening, just after dark—if it hadn't been for Hedda—" Her voice trailed off into nothing but I could fill in the break well enough, and again the murder demon whispered in my ear.

"Damn him!" I gritted and I am sure she was able to supply the missing antecedent to the pronoun. Then: "Where is this girl now?"

"I left her asleep under one of the hut shelters."

"We must get her," I said shortly. "You're not going back to that bunch, you know." I got up and lifted her to her feet. "Come with me far enough to show me where your woman is; I'll do the rest."

And together we set out to return by way of the curving beach to the glade of the camp fire.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FLIGHT IN THE DARK.

When we reached the edge of the glade I was relieved to see that the figures around the dying fire—which Alison told me had been lighted as a smudge to drive the mosquitoes away—were now all recumbent; a fair indication that the survivors of the *Waikiki's* company were all asleep. Alison wanted to be the one to go and wake her maid but I wouldn't listen to that.

"You will take no more chances, not if I can help it," I told her. "Just show me where the girl is and I'll bring her out."

"But she doesn't know you; and if she screams and wakes the others—"

"In that case somebody is mighty likely to get hurt," I promised. "After what you've told me, I wouldn't mind running amuck in that bunch. It's a crime to let Wickham Jeffreys go on living, don't you think?"

"But, Dick—for my sake!" she pleaded. "You are only one man and there are so many of them!"

"I have this," I said, showing her the rusty revolver which I had been carrying in my belt as a persuader for Brill.

"Hedda is under this nearest shelter," she said, pointing. "That is she, on the side farthest from the fire. You'll be awfully careful?"

"Naturally, with your safety at stake. Stay here in the shadows and don't show yourself no matter what happens. I won't be long about it."

One never knows what experience in life is going to turn up later as the one thing critically useful. Once on a preliminary survey for a mining railroad in the Idaho mountains I had numbered in my gang an old hunter and woodsman who had taught me the art—for it is no less than an art—of deer stalking. Flat on my stomach I wormed my way toward the shelters in the open glade, wriggling forward by slow inches and never taking my eyes from the figures around the fire. Twice, and once again when one of the men stirred, I stopped and tried to look as much as possible like a log, but there was no alarm given.

In due time I was within arm's reach of the sleeping young woman. Luckily she

was lying a little apart from the others, flat on her back and with her mouth open; a big girl, with the arm she had thrown over her head muscular enough to garrote a giant and her deep bosom rising and subsiding like the swell of a little sea. Choosing the instant of breath taking I clapped a hand over the open mouth and put my lips to her ear.

"Don't make a noise—for your life!" I hissed. "Miss Carter wants you!"

For a battling moment I had my hands full to keep her quiet. She was as strong as a daughter of the vikings. As a matter of fact, I had to draw the revolver and press the cold muzzle of it to her head before I could make her understand that she must stop struggling and come with me. And even at that I couldn't force her to lie down and creep away silently. She bounced to her feet and all I could do was to spring up and run with her, ready to cover the retreat with the revolver if the hue and cry should be raised.

Fortunately the alarm wasn't given. As if they had all been drunk the sleepers at the fire and under the shelters slept on undisturbed, and running swiftly we soon reached the fringe of the jungle and found Alison.

From that to getting away from the vicinity of the glade was an easy matter. Keeping in the shadows of the wood we retreated to the beach and soon put distance between us and the landing place of the shipwrecked yacht's company. There was some little method in this. It was certain that as soon as Alison and her maid were missed a search would be made and while I had no plan as yet reaching beyond a return to the stranded schooner I thought it would be wise not to leave too plain a trail across the island. To avoid doing so we kept on along the beach for a full half mile before turning to enter the jungle.

It was then that the real work of the flight began. I had found it difficult enough to cross the island alone in the darkness; but with two women to pilot and help the difficulties were much more than multiplied by three. Uncounted times during the fight with the vegetation I had to kneel and grope to free Alison's skirts or the Swedish girl's from the brier tangles, and even so I knew they were going to come out of the thicket in rags and tatters. But neither of them complained.

As the longest night will finally come to an end so will the most toilsome flight. In due course of time we came out upon the other beach not so very far from the black bulk of the stranded *Vesta*. A cooling breeze had sprung up, blowing in from the sea, and I was glad, thinking it would drive the mosquitoes back from the beach, as it did. The red lantern which we had hoisted at the *Vesta's* masthead at dark glowed like a red star against a background of white-starred black velvet and I pointed it out to Alison.

"That light is on the schooner. It's only a little way now. Are you terribly tired?"

"Not so tired as—as hungry," she returned in a weak little voice.

It was then and only then that I recalled what she had told me about the lack of food in the camp of the castaways. And here I had been dragging her for miles through a labyrinth formidable enough to have wearied a well-fed athlete.

"If you can keep going just a bit longer," I said, and when I slipped an arm around her she was worn enough to lean on me like a tired child.

At the schooner there was neither sight nor sound to reveal the fact that four men were asleep in her. The rope by means of which I had descended from the deck hung over the bows and I showed the Swedish girl how she was to knot it under her mistress' arms after I had climbed aboard. With the help of the rope I soon had Alison beside me and together we hauled the bulky daughter of vikings up to where she could lay hold of the bulwark.

"Those terrible ruffians who kidnaped you," said Alison clinging to me as I led her aft, "where are they?"

"Between decks and sound asleep," I answered. "I don't suppose anything short of an earthquake would rouse them. It is the first chance they have had to catch up in two pretty hard days and nights. And you needn't be afraid of them, asleep or awake. One of them wouldn't hurt you if he could and the other couldn't if he would, because he knows I'd kill him."

"And the others—the sailors?"

"They are asleep too—in the forecabin. But they are my friends and fellow mutineers. We are three men to two and one of the two has a broken arm. You are perfectly safe, so far as this vessel's company is concerned."

Telling the two women to sit down on my blankets and rest I tiptoed forward to the galley and with one of the alcohol candles for a fire heated some water and made a pot of coffee. This, with a tin of biscuits, a can of bully beef and another of apricots, I carried aft to the starved ones.

"Can you manage to eat by the starlight?" I asked.

"I could eat in the deepest, darkest dungeon of a Middle Ages castle," Alison said, with a tired little laugh; and the laugh did me more good than anything except the way she ate and drank and chirked up under the stimulus of the food and the hot coffee and speedily became the self-reliant, clear-headed girl I had known so well in our childhood days.

"Well, what next?" she inquired after the biscuit tin had been emptied, even to the crumbs, by the two of them. "Do you suppose Wickham Jeffreys is going to let me vanish into thin air without trying to find out what has become of me?"

I had rearranged the blankets and now I told the Swedish girl to lie down and have her nap out. When she was asleep, which was in less than half a minute after she had stretched herself under the lee of the rail, I answered Alison's question by asking one of my own:

"Tell me; is Jeffreys as madly in love with you as all this cave-man stuff would seem to indicate?"

"Honestly, Dick, I don't think he is; not even the kind of love that such a brute as he is capable of. I imagine there is something bigger and deeper at the bottom of all this. Whatever else he is, Wickham is not a fool. He must know that if he should force me to marry him nothing on earth could force me to live with him as his wife after we get back to civilization."

"You have no idea of what the bigger thing is?"

"Not in the least. But I do know this; that not even a cave man in love with a cave woman—but it is too horrible to talk about."

"And yet you say he is bent upon marrying you."

"He said that I'd got to marry him; that I'd never see daddy again until we were safely man and wife; that he wouldn't stop at anything to make me take him and take him willingly."

"That clears the air a bit," I said. "I

don't know any more than a goat what is to become of us here on this lonesome island or what we shall do when our food supply is gone, but I do know this, that when Wickham Jeffreys gets you in his power again it will be after I am too dead to bury. That's that. Now curl up there beside your woman and go to sleep. To-morrow may be a very busy day for all of us."

"And you?" she asked.

"I shall sleep too, but not just yet. I'll put our fortress in a state of siege first."

"Have I got to go to sleep?"

"You have. I'm the captain of this hooker—the pirate captain, if you please—and my orders must be obeyed. Good night."

She put out her hand. "You're good, Dick; always good and dear and splendidly dependable. You came to-night like a special angel from heaven. Wo-won't you kiss me?"

Of course I did it, trying to make the kiss as cool and brotherly as it ought to have been since she had told me that there was another man who was the only one that had the right to kiss her any other way. But after it was done and the touch of her soft lips was burning itself into my very soul I told myself that there must be no more of this; that it must be strictly a case of touch not, handle not, for me. After which I went forward to rout out José and put him on guard, telling him of the presence of the women on the schooner and of the *Waikiki* survivors on the other side of the island and of the new danger that threatened us in consequence. Having his assurance that he would call me instantly if anything untoward occurred I stretched myself on the bunched staysail to try for the sleep which the wonderful discovery and exciting experiences of the past few hours were threatening to postpone indefinitely.

Sleep came at last but not, however, until after I had sorted out some of the problems and possibilities. It was not difficult to find a starting point. Wickham Jeffreys as I knew him, spendthrift, loose liver, high roller, was not the man to grab off the methods of the bandit and the holdup artist unless there were some powerful motive to drive him. Discounting the argument he had used upon Alison—that her father was in danger of a prison sentence and that he, Jeffreys, was seeking to avert the catastrophe—it required no stretch of the imagina-

tion to postulate what I was convinced was the true state of affairs; namely that it was the Jeffreys, father and son, who were in danger of the prison sentence and that honest old Hiram Carter was the person who would do the sentencing unless some means were found of tying his hands. And what means could be more effective than the marriage of one of the criminals to the only daughter of the chief prosecutor?

With so much assumed it was not to be supposed that Jeffreys would quit simply because Alison and her maid had disappeared in the night. He would know that the two women could not get very far away and with the men of his party to help he would speedily comb the island for them. The only thing that might delay the search would be the lack of food; but this lack was going to be our own too, very shortly. True, there were coconuts on the trees and shellfish in the lagoon; Alison had told me that a scanty supply of both had been gathered by the *Waikiki* survivors during the day; but these were poor filling for white stomachs.

At this I remembered another thing that Alison had said; that the *Waikiki* was still above water on an offshore rock or shoal. There were doubtless plenty of provisions on board the yacht, out of reach for the boatless crew on the other side of the island but not out of reach for us. The *Vesta's* whaleboat was still firmly lashed in its chocks on top of our deck house, having come through the hurricane without being carried away and without damage. If the sea should remain calm, what was to prevent our sailing around the island and looting the wreck in our own behalf?

It was with this cheering thought in mind that I finally fell asleep; and it was broad day and the sun was peering over the island treetops at us when I awoke to find Dorgan standing over me. He was pointing aft and saying: "Hell's bells, pardner! Lookee what's been fetched us in the night!"

I looked and saw the two women still sleeping snuggled in the blankets.

"I brought them, Dorgan," I said. "The yacht is wrecked on the other side of this island. I saw the light of a fire after you'd gone to bed and went over to investigate." Then I told him briefly the circumstances, or enough of them to let him get hold of the situation.

"Well, I'm damned!" he commented. "Wouldn't that jar your back teeth loose? Hell's own hurricane for two days and nights and both ships blown ashore on the same pin point o' land! Nobody'll ever believe it. What you goin' to do with them women?"

"We are going to keep them with us, of course." Then I looked him in the eyes: "And, besides that, we're going to treat them as if they owned the earth and everything on it. Do you get that, Dorgan?"

"Huh! You don't need to say that to me; Isra'l Brill is the one you got to rub that into. I done told you what *my* mushy spot is. But Isra'l, he's another keg o' nails, he is."

"I'll fix Brill," I said. "Where is he?"

"Still corkin' it off in his bunk; looks like he's goin' to snooze the clock around. But what about these folk on t'other side? Do they know you've got the women?"

"They know it now—or at least they know they haven't got them. We'll likely have visitors before the day is over."

"Peaceable?—or warlike?"

"Warlike, most probably."

"All right. I've got one good arm and hand yet—if you reckon you could make out to trust me with a gun."

I took the bull by the horns because I knew I'd have to sooner or later. "I'd trust you anywhere, Dorgan, if you gave me your word."

"You can," he remarked, shortly; adding: "Only you'd better not trust Isra'l. He'd do you up in a holy minute if you gave him a chance to get out of it with a whole skin."

It was just here that the interruption broke in. Brill hadn't slept the clock around. I saw his red head and heavy shoulders coming up out of the companionway and heard his astonished whistle when his eyes lighted upon the women. Alison heard it, too, and started up like a scared wild creature. By that time I had run aft and was on the job.

"The least said is the soonest mended, Brill," I snapped at him. "I'm the captain of this ship and this lady and her maid are my guests. So long as you treat them as my guests you'll live. When you forget you'll die. Go up forward and Dorgan will tell you what happened in the night."

"Goodness!" said Alison with a little shudder. "What a dreadful face! Is he one of your kidnapers?"

"Yes; and that is the other up there by the foremast; the big man with the bandaged arm and head. Did you have a good sleep?"

She was stretching her pretty arms over her head.

"The best I've had in I don't know how many nights. Oh, but it's good not to have the nightmare, Dick!"

Her saying that gave me a thrill like the pricking of pins. Here we were stranded on an uninhabited islet and with a fair-to-middling prospect of starving before we were through with it and yet the misery she had been enduring had been so bitter that the present and prospective hardships seemed as nothing to her.

While she was speaking the Swedish young woman stirred, threw off the blanket and got upon her feet. Seen in daylight she was a magnificent specimen of the Scandinavian peasant type, generously large, not unshapely, with big blue eyes, a milk-white skin and a perfect mane of tow-colored hair which she was wearing in a thick braid down her back. She looked at me with a calm stare.

"Aye fought you las' night baycoose Aye tank you bane Mester Vickham," she said slowly.

"That's all right, Hedda," I returned laughing. "I couldn't let you make a noise, you know, and rouse the others." Then I turned to Alison: "The cabin is yours, though you won't find much down there but a washbasin and some water. While you're gone I'll see what I can do toward getting breakfast."

But here the daughter of vikings had her say: "You vait yooost liddle vile and lat dem breakfast vait, too. If you got somedings to eat I bane cook it for everybody."

"Can she?" I asked Alison.

"I wouldn't put anything beyond Hedda. She is a treasure."

While the women were below I went forward and joined Brill and Dorgan at the foremast. Dorgan was ready with a question.

"What's your lay when them dickies fr'm t'other side turn up?"

"If we're here we'll turn them down," I replied.

"They'll want the women back?"

"Undoubtedly."

"How many did you say there was of 'em?"

"There are eleven men in all—and five women."

"Will the men fight?"

"If your bribe payer can make them—yes."

"A little worse'n two to one; reckon we can stand 'em off?"

"We've got it to do—if we're here."

"You said that afore—if we're here. Where else would we be?"

I pointed to the whaleboat.

"Miss Carter says the yacht didn't sink and that it hasn't gone to pieces yet. It is hung up on a reef or shoal on the other side of the island. The other people can't get to it because they have no boat. But we can."

Dorgan grinned.

"We got a wreck of our own; whadda we want of another?"

"Your head must be hurting you again," I said. "If the sea hasn't looted her completely the *Waikiki* has plenty of good food aboard."

"You ride," the big man chuckled. "I reckon I'm one o' them willies that has to have their heads chopped off afore they know 'at they're dead."

Brill didn't say anything but he called José and Pedro and sent them aloft to rig a tackle for hoisting the whaleboat over the side; and he did it without cursing.

Some half hour later Hedda dished us up a breakfast which, though it made reckless havoc of our scanty larder stock was a vast improvement upon anything we'd had since the *Vesta* had left Miami. Dorgan, Brill and the sailors gorged themselves at the galley but Hedda served Alison and me on the break of the deck house. While we were eating I told Alison that our food supply was about exhausted and that if we couldn't re-new it from the wreck of the *Waikiki* we'd soon be no better off than the yacht's survivors. This brought on more talk about our situation as castaways and the prospects for a rescue. Volney, the sailing master of the yacht, had been lost when the *Waikiki* struck and the first boatload of the panic-stricken went down, and from what Alison was able to tell me I gathered that there was no one among the survivors who could make even an intelligent guess as to the longitude and latitude of our island.

"Brill 'shot the sun' yesterday and he says our latitude is between nineteen and twenty degrees, north, which would put us

well out of the track of the steamer lines," I said. "Beyond that it is all guesswork. We are just somewhere in the Caribbean."

"That sounds tragic, doesn't it!" she commented with a little shiver. "When the news gets out I suppose that will be the headline in the home newspapers: 'Lost, the Private Yacht *Waikiki*—Somewhere in the Caribbean.' And when the food is all gone——"

"We won't borrow trouble from the future," I hastened to say. "The Caribbean isn't as wide as the Pacific or even the Atlantic. Besides we are going to have trouble nearer at hand. I believe Jeffreys has the best of reasons for not wanting to lose you; a much more vital reason than the sham altruistic notion he was trying to make you swallow. Don't you?"

She nodded and said: "I wonder if we are thinking of the same thing, Dick?"

"That the penitentiary threat is really hanging over Jeffreys and his father instead of over your father?" I suggested.

She nodded again, saying: "Could it be that way?"

"I am pretty confident that it is that way. Everything points to it. I know positively that the two Jeffreys are as crooked as rams' horns; that was why I was fired last spring in Colorado—as a scapegoat to cover up some of their grafting. It says itself that if you were married to Wickham your father wouldn't prosecute; and if the Jeffreys are in a criminal hole—which seems likely—he'd pay them out of it and take the loss himself to save you from a scandal and disgrace. Haven't you ever considered it in that light?"

"I have," she returned, which proved what I had always known—that she was much more clear-headed and logical than most young women who haven't had to go up against the grimmer realities of life.

"In that case we haven't heard the last of Wickham Jeffreys," I went on. "You are his sheet anchor—his hope of salvation—and he isn't going to lose you without a struggle. What sort of a crew did you have in the *Waikiki*? Scoundrels, I should say, from what they did when the yacht struck."

"Those that were saved were no better. You'd think they were hired ruffians from the way they act."

"They probably are, and Jeffreys picked them for his purpose. This island is small and he'll comb it in his search for you and

Hedda. When he finds this schooner and recognizes her he'll know what's happened and that you are with me. That will mean war. Wickham Jeffreys is not precisely the kind of material out of which buccaneers and bloody-handed pirates are made. But even a rat will bite when it is cornered."

She looked at me wide-eyed.

"Are you trying to frighten me, Dick?"

"The Lord forbid! I am only trying to prepare you for what may happen. If Wickham and his gang find us, as they are morally certain to, there will be battle and murder and quite possibly sudden death. I'm going to dodge all this if I can, but if worst comes to worst——"

"I understand," she broke in quite calmly. Then she repeated what she had said in the night: "You're good, Dick; always good and dependable. I think I am going to owe you more than I can ever repay."

"Nothing like it!" I rejoined as lightly as I could, loving her as I did. "Now, if you are ready we'll disappear and at least postpone the evil day for a little while."

Pedro and José had gotten the whaleboat over the side and around under the stern of the schooner and Brill had rigged a spare staysail boom for a stub mast with a lug sail. It seemed only the part of prudence to take what was left of our provisions, so I told José to empty the galley locker into the boat and to add a breaker of water drawn from the *Vesta's* fresh-water butt. The one important thing that I forgot to do—and the memory lapse was inexcusable—was to go down into the hold and get the arms and ammunition from their hiding place in the liquor cargo.

The seven of us made a fairly full load for the whaleboat but though there was a steady land breeze blowing there was no sea on and the lagoon was like a mill pond. When the Minorcans had set the tiny sail Brill took the steering oar and we shoved off. As yet there had been neither sight nor sound from the jungle but I was momentarily expecting both. I could easily picture Jeffreys' dismay and rage—not to speak of any uglier emotions—when he found that his safety anchor had been pulled up by the roots.

With the breeze coming off the land we had a fair sailing wind and the whaleboat behaved very well, making good time as we coasted along between the reef and the mainland. The coast line of the island on

that side—on both sides, as we afterward learned—was somewhat irregular, being indented with little bays and coves with blunt headlands to separate them, and it was just as we were rounding the first of these headlands and were getting our last glimpse of the beached *Vesta* that Alison laid a hand on my arm. "Look!" she whispered and when I looked I saw the beach at the schooner's bow suddenly dotted with the figures of men.

Dorgan saw them too and gave his wide-mouthed grin.

"I reckon we didn't crawl out none too soon," he observed. And then: "Whadda you allow they'll do to the schooner?"

"Raid the cargo," I prophesied; "do that and try to make your contraband answer for the food they haven't got."

"Here's hopin' it'll p'ison the last one of 'em deader'n a nit!" said Brill bitterly; and then a twist of the steering oar sent us past the point of land and blotted out the distant view of the *Vesta* and her raiders.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST OF THE "VESTA."

I was hoping very earnestly that the Jeffreys crew of searchers hadn't seen us. The tackle by which the whaleboat had been launched was sufficient evidence of the means of our departure, of course, but I thought there might be some small advantage accruing to us if the raiders didn't learn that we had just left and were hardly out of sight along the shore. On the other hand, if they had seen us and marked the crowded condition of our boat they would know that we couldn't venture very far from land.

As we went on we found the outer reef drawing nearer to the shore, finally coming to a place where the lagoon itself was so narrow and bestudded with the coral growth as to compel us to take to the open water beyond the barrier. Here the ground swell was pretty heavy but the whaleboat, even laden as it was, performed very well under Brill's skillful juggling and we were soon rounding the northeastern end of the islet and jibing to lay a course down its farther side.

In a short time we came in sight of the *Waikiki*. She was standing head toward the land, with a little list to starboard, and but for the leaning position might have seemed to be quietly at anchor. As we ap-

proached I scanned the shore through Brill's binoculars. There was no sign of life anywhere and I saw that one of the bay headlands shut off the view of the yacht from the camp the survivors had pitched in the glade. It occurred to me at once that here was another of the small advantages. Unless some of the campers should follow the beach around the headland our presence on the yacht would go undiscovered.

To hold this advantage for what it might be worth I directed Brill to bring the boat up under the yacht's counter on the seaward side where it couldn't be seen from any point on the beach. This was done and the list of the yacht let us climb aboard without difficulty. Once on the deck we saw that the sea had mishandled the smart little liner shamefully. The after-deck awning was gone and its iron stanchions were bent or broken. The lounge furniture, settees, lounges and chairs, were all gone of course, and the ornamental brass rail which had surmounted the ordinary wooden one had been carried away. The glass in the windows of the cabin had disappeared and the handsome gold-and-white dining saloon looked as if a crew of madmen had been holding an orgy in it.

Seeing all this wreckage, I supposed, of course, that the yacht's hold would be full of water; and, indeed we soon discovered that she had taken in a lot of it. Oddly enough the flooding was confined chiefly to the forward compartments of the hold, the bulkheading cross partitions having kept it from submerging the boiler and engine rooms. In the latter the water was only ankle deep over the floor; in the boiler space there was more—it had risen high enough to flood the grates.

Naturally, with the water six or eight feet deep in the forehold, we could not tell how much damage had been done to her underbody at the bows when she struck; that is, whether or not she was stove and leaking. But there was reason to hope that her substantial steel skin was unbroken; a hope that was strengthened when we found that she was hung up on a sand shoal and not on a reef. For a pleasure craft she was built very stanchly and while her top works were badly knocked about, as they would be by the hammering of the giant seas breaking over her, she was by no means the total wreck we had been expecting to find her.

While Brill and Dorgan and I were look-

ing the hull over Alison and the Swedish young woman investigated the pantry and storerooms. In these they found a plentiful supply of provisions, much of it still undamaged. So far as food was concerned there was subsistence for weeks, not only for us, but for the other castaways if we chose to divide with them. As to the dividing I fancy the same thought came to both Alison and me a little later when we were checking over the ample food stock.

"Those people on shore," she said: "goodness knows, I have no reason to be especially generous to them. But it is rather dreadful to think of them starving on coconuts and shellfish when we have plenty of civilized food."

"I was thinking of that, too," I admitted. "For the sake of the women they have with them we'll find a way to divide; though as for Wickham Jeffreys I'd be quite willing to let him chew on the nuts and sea worms for the remainder of his days."

"But how can you divide with them without running into danger?"

"Easily. We'll wait until after dark and then take the whaleboat and set a cargo of this stuff ashore. They'll find it if we leave it on the beach in plain sight."

"We are going to stay here in the yacht?" she asked.

"It is the safest place for the present and while the weather holds good. Those people can't reach us without a boat; and besides, the wreck of the yacht will be much more likely to attract the attention of some passing vessel than will our beached schooner on the other side of the island."

Throughout that day, during which we busied ourselves industriously in making the yacht habitable, cleaning up the storm mess, drying the bedding in the sun, and—José and I, at least—making a swimming pool of the forehold in an effort to find out if any of the bow plates had been started in the grounding, we saw no signs of life on shore and I wondered if it hadn't yet occurred to Jeffreys or some of the others that we had forsaken the schooner for the *Waikiki*.

There was the hoisting tackle on board the *Vesta* to show that we had launched a boat and the hot galley stove to prove that the time of our departure must have very nearly coincided with that of their discovery of the schooner. But in these speculations I failed to consider one important

factor, namely, the *Vesta's* cargo and the nature of it. As the event proved the finding of the liquor in the schooner's hold had been the introduction to a day-long carouse and it was this that gave us our temporary immunity. But of this, more in its place.

As may be imagined I did not let the "redding-up" of the dismantled yacht pause with the mere job of making it habitable for the time being. I did not need Brill's assurance that another storm, or even the threat of one, would, if the yacht remained in its present position, force us to take refuge on the island again. As the little ship lay on the shoal she would be swept by a very moderate sea, to say nothing of the danger of her breaking up. So with the two Minorcans to help and the whaleboat for a working stage I made a thorough examination of the hull on the outside, taking soundings all around and making rough measurements to ascertain just how badly we were stranded.

The results were rather encouraging. The shoal was much like a river sand bar and though the yacht was firmly embedded forward there was deep water under her stern—five fathoms as we measured it with the lead line. I was confident that if she could be freed of the heavy burden of water in the holds there was an even chance that she might be floated.

Next, I overhauled the machinery. So far as I could determine this was all intact. Here again it was only the water that had come aboard that prevented its use and even with that handicap I thought we might still be able to bail the fire room and so be in shape to get steam on the boilers; enough, at least, to permit us to run the steam bilge pumps.

Summing up the total of these prying for Dorgan and Brill I told them that if we had lost a schooner I was of the opinion that we stood a fair chance of finding a yacht. If all other means of rescue failed we could turn ourselves into a wrecking crew and try to get the *Waikiki* afloat.

"Huh!" sniffed Brill. "What you goin' to do with her if you do float her?"

"Go back to the world in her, of course!" I retorted.

"Where's your engineer?"

"I can handle that end of it if you can take the bridge."

"I dunno," he grumbled. "I never sailed nothin' bigger than a coastin' schooner."

"Well, if we get this baby in commission you'll never learn any younger how to handle a steamer," I told him. "But that is a future. I have just remembered something that I ought never to have forgotten. You had some rifles and ammunition aboard the *Vesta*."

"Yes; and by cripes, you took 'em out o' the cabin locker and hid 'em," Brill complained.

"Ah?" said I; "you went after them, did you? That was what I expected and it was why I took them away. We've got to go back and get those guns."

"What for?" It was Dorgan who wanted to know.

"Because they are high-powered rifles and we are not out of range from the beach. I don't know the temper of those men on shore or how far they will go, but I do know that their leader's one decent accomplishment is the ability to shoot straight. He was once a member of a crack rifle team in New York and I've seen him at the butts. He's an expert marksman."

At this they both agreed with me that we'd have to go back to the schooner; Dorgan heartily enough and Brill morosely. And it was Brill, and not Dorgan, who objected surlily when I said we'd kill two birds with one stone and set some provisions ashore for the *Waikiki's* castaways while we had the whaleboat manned.

"I don't see no use a-doin' that," he growled. "Let 'em starve, by grapples! If the shoe was on t'other foot they'd see us in hell afore they'd split with us. Besides, we may need all there is ourselves."

At this Dorgan called him down savagely.

"You ain't fit to live on the same earth with human bein's, Isra'l," he ripped out. "Ain't Cap'n Ainsley done told you they got wimmen with 'em? But you wouldn't mind starvin' a lot of wimmen, *you* wouldn't!"

The plans for the expedition were soon formulated. As soon as it grew dark we would load the boat with provisions, and blankets and clothing for the women, and let the two Minorcans row it ashore and unload it. That done we would sail around the head of the island and under cover of the darkness reconnoiter the *Vesta*. If the enemy were not in possession we'd go aboard and search for the weapons.

The first part of this program was carried out without incident. The boatload of stuff was taken ashore and piled up on

the beach where in daylight it could not fail to be seen from the camp, and the two sailors pulled back to the yacht. For the descent upon the schooner I decided to take the two women along. Alison bravely offered to stay in the yacht with Hedda for a companion and there seemed to be little reason to fear that the two of them wouldn't be safe enough; but I was not taking any chances. So, with the same boat's company we had had in the retreat from the *Vesta* we set out to redouble the island head.

Of all the risks we had taken thus far, this voyage in the starlight along a reef-studded shore was perhaps the most hazardous. The land breeze of the forenoon had shifted to a sea breeze and that was in our favor; but while there was not wind enough to put the sea up there was a heavier ground swell than that we had encountered in the morning and in any hands less skillful than Israel Brill's I am convinced that the whaleboat, driven by the clumsy lug sail, would speedily have come to grief in the breakers. As it was we had some pretty narrow escapes before we won to the shelter of the western lagoon; but we made it finally with no more than a few bucketfuls of water to slosh around in the bottom of the boat to remind us of the danger past.

Once in the lagoon and stealing along in the shadow of the beach-crowding jungle we began to look ahead to pick out the dark bulk of the *Vesta*. It seemed to me that we had gone fully twice the distance traversed in the morning before Brill suddenly put his steering-oar helm hard down and gave José an order that made the Minorcan quickly spill the wind out of our sail and so bring the whaleboat to a stand. In the distance we could hear voices, a confused medley of them as of men shouting. It was Dorgan who corrected that impression.

"Drunk and disorderly," he chuckled. "They're still there and they're singin'. They can't break loose fr'm the booze."

There was something inexpressibly weird and uncanny in the discordant racket that floated out to us upon the breeze; tuneless songs that were shouted rather than sung. I was sitting next to Alison in the boat, and I could feel her shudder of repugnance and disgust. "Beasts!" she said. "It was coming to that on the yacht, at the last. There were times when Hedda and I had to lock ourselves in our stateroom."

At another order from Brill the two sailors got out the oars and pulled us slowly around the point of land that was cutting off our view of the *Vesta's* grounding beach. A single glance showed us that we were out of the picture so far as any chance of boarding the schooner was concerned. The drunken crew had built a fire on the beach, apparently with dry lumber chopped out of the vessel, and around it a dozen half-clad figures were reeling and dancing like a mob of crazy savages. And there were women in the whirling circle. Alison was shuddering again and she drew closer to me.

"Do you wonder that I was ready to walk into the sea last night?" she whispered shakely; then: "And at home those people would call themselves civilized."

Plainly we had no business on that side of the island; none whatever; and there was certainly nothing in this disgraceful spectacle of a lot of our fellow human beings gone mad to hold us. But when I would have given the order to retreat, or did give it, Brill hesitated.

"Wait a minute," he urged. "Let's see what yer' cozin' next."

As he spoke the reeling figures around the fire began to snatch up blazing brands, whirling them over their heads as they danced. By the light of these waving torches we could see that they had made some sort of a plank runway from the schooner's deck to the sands. While we looked a single figure broke out of the whirling-dervish circle and flaming torch in hand ran up the plank gangway to disappear, torch and all, into the *Vesta's* hold.

"He's gone after more o' the Scotch," said Dorgan and his guess was immediately confirmed when the hold diver reappeared with an armful of objects that we took to be bottles—but without the torch!

"Blast his soul!" gritted Brill. "He's gone and left that fire stick in the hold! That'll be the last o' the old *Vesta!*"

It scarcely asked for a prophet or the son of a prophet thus to foretell the result of the liquor carrier's negligence. While the maniacs around the bonfire were knocking the necks from the bottles a column of smoke began to pour up out of the schooner's hatchway. Nobody saw it or heeded it until the smoke column turned to a lurid pillar of flame to go licking up into the ship's rigging with a roar like that of a blast furnace. So far as anything could do

so the spectacle sobered the maniacs for the moment, at least. Four or five of the men rushed up the gangplank to the schooner's deck but were immediately driven back by the violence of the flames.

Beyond this, two of them tried again, climbing to the deck and essaying to clap the hatch upon the spouting volcano; did get it part way on before the fire reached the alcoholic mixtures in the hold and began to explode them in jets and geyser bursts of many-colored flame. When that happened there was nothing more to be done and we could see the fire-illuminated figures driven by the furnacelike heat stumbling and reeling along the beach in our direction.

It was our signal to vanish. Brill, cursing bitterly at the wanton destruction both of his vessel and her costly cargo, flung himself upon the steering oar and brought the boat around while the two sailors bent manfully to their job on the thwarts. A few quick strokes carried the whaleboat out far enough to let us get the breeze and the oars were shipped and the sail spread.

Looking back as we gathered headway we could see the whole heavens lighted balefully with the glare of the burning vessel, the red reflection of it reaching far out to sea. Nobody spoke until after Brill had negotiated the dangerous passages through the reef and we were once more swaying and swinging on the uneasy bosom of the ground swell outside. Then Dorgan said, with his hoarse chuckle: "All I'm hopin' is that they're burnin' up them rifles and that box o' shells along with the bug juice." And I, for one, was fervently echoing the big man's pious hope.

In due time we reached the yacht and climbed aboard. From her deck we could still see the red glare in the sky. Whatever faint hope any of us might have been cherishing of making the *Vesta* carry us back to civilization was going up in smoke and flames: our only resources now were a water-logged yacht fast aground and an open boat.

CHAPTER X.

A THIEF IN THE NIGHT.

Though the *Waikiki's* electric-light plant was out of commission and would be until I could take time to overhaul it there were candles and ship's lanterns enough to give us what light we needed and after arrange-

ments for the night had been made, with the Minorcans to take alternate watches of two hours each, I was making a round of the deck preparatory to turning in when Alison came out and joined me on the after deck. The red glow in the western sky was still undiminished and the reflection of it was strong enough to make the yacht stand out white and ghostlike in the rose-tinged night.

"You see now, Dick, what a beastly bacchanalian lot I sailed with," she began. "I didn't know beforehand, and of course daddy didn't know when he wrote me to come down with Wickham's party what sort of people Wickham had invited."

"Of course not," I agreed; then: "In this letter you speak of, did he say he would meet you in Havana?"

"Yes; and I suppose he is there now, crazy with anxiety. He must know that the *Waikiki* cleared from Miami for Havana four days ago and that she hasn't been heard of since the hurricane."

"Did he write from Havana?"

"No; his letter was sent from Puerto Barrios, Honduras."

Ever since she had told me about the letter I had been wondering if it too might not be a part of Wickham Jeffreys' plot.

"I don't suppose, by any chance, you brought that letter with you, did you?" I asked.

"Why, yes; I think it is in my writing case in the steamer trunk."

"Would you mind letting me see it?"

"I'll be glad to."

I went with her as far as the main cabin and waited while she went into her stateroom and searched for the letter. When she brought it I was obliged to admit that it seemed perfectly genuine. It was typewritten on ordinary letter paper without any printed heading and though the paper bore the trade-mark of an American mill that proved nothing. And the signature, the single word, "Daddy," proved still less. It was written in Hiram Carter's familiar backhand and I doubted if even a handwriting expert would have questioned it.

It was not until I began to examine the inclosing envelope that the hopeful suspicion I had been cherishing raised its head again. The stamp and postmark were Hondurian, to be sure, though the date in the postmark was blurred so as to be entirely undecipherable. But it was the address that interested me most. At a casual glance

there seemed to be nothing wrong with it; it was in typewriting, like the letter, and its three lines bore Alison's name, the Carter street and house number, and "New York City, U. S. A." It was this final line that gave the clew. It was not quite parallel with the other two and it unmistakably was in a slightly different type.

"See here," I said, holding the envelope nearer the candle. "Why do you suppose your father, or his Puerto Barrios amanuensis if he had one, used two different typewriters in addressing this?"

"The 'New York City' is different, isn't it?" she breathed, examining it closely. "What does that mean, Dick?"

I tore the back from the envelope and held the address face up before the light. At once the trick became as transparent as the paper upon which it had been turned. There had formerly been another address on the envelope and the first two lines of it had been erased and Alison's name and the Carter street and house number substituted. It has been said that the most careful criminal always misses a bet somewhere in the course of his undertaking. It would have been perfectly feasible to erase and rewrite all three lines of the address in which case the clew would have been buried. But the forger—Wickham Jeffreys or another—had slipped.

"It is a forgery," I asserted, "just as I have been suspecting it might be. Whoever wrote this letter was obliged to have an envelope with the Hondurian stamp and postmark on it and since the Carter Company has a contract in Honduras any wastebasket in the New York offices of the company would furnish that. If you will look carefully you will see a faint shadow of the original address, which was to the company and not to you, under the typing of your name."

She looked, saw, and gasped; but the gasp was of relief rather than of shocked astoundment.

"Of course it's a forgery!" she exclaimed. "How could I ever have imagined that daddy would write such a letter to me!" Then: "What unspeakable villainy! And yet in the light of what has happened since — Oh, Dick! what would have become of me if you hadn't turned mutineer and pirate captain or if your ship hadn't been wrecked on the same island with the *Waikiki*!"

"It has all been mighty providential thus far," I admitted. "But now you see how desperately the two Jeffreys must be involved. I am glad to know about this letter and to have my suspicion confirmed. Forewarned is forearmed. Having gone so far Wickham isn't likely to stick at anything now to make his plot go through."

"But what can he do, when they have no boat?"

"I can't say as to that. But you may be sure we'll hear from him in some way as soon as he finds out that we are here in the yacht. He knows he can never go back to civilization unless he takes his 'hostage' with him—and you are the hostage."

The candlelight wasn't very good but I made sure her eyes were suspiciously bright when she turned to face me and put her hands on my shoulders and said: "I'm thanking God more and more for you every minute, Dick, dear!"

Of course I went clear off my head at that. If I have said anything heretofore to give the impression that I wasn't a human man like other men, it was a mistake. I was and am. Right there and then in that white-and-gold dismantled dining saloon I crushed her in my arms and kissed her until she was fairly gasping for breath. But swift upon the heels of the uncontrollable passion fit came repentance and remorse.

"Forgive me if you can, Alison," I stammered. "I know what you meant, but—but it pushed me over the edge. I'm a cad, a brute—anything you like to call me, for I haven't forgotten for a single minute that you told me there is another man. Just the same, I've loved you ever since we were children together and it isn't my fault that your father's money came between us to keep me from telling you so."

Blurting all this out most shamefacedly I stepped back prepared to take what was coming to me. But she didn't say any of the things I had given her a right to say. She had turned away and was covering her face with her hands and I thought she was crying. But there were no tears in her voice when she said softly, behind the shielding hands: "I—I think you'd better go away, now, Dick, and—and leave me. For—for, you see, I love that other man very madly and if he should ever find out what—"

I didn't wait to hear any more and shortly after I reached the deck I heard her

stateroom door close behind her. Feeling more like a sheep thief than I had ever thought a man of my blood and breeding could feel I went aft to substitute a lock and chain for the whaleboat's rope painter, this purely on Israel Brill's account. His surly attitude kept me constantly suspicious of him and Dorgan's warning also carried weight. I knew Brill was charging the loss of his schooner and her cargo up to me, as in a way he was justified in doing, and I didn't doubt for a moment that he would sell us out if he could get in communication with Jeffreys and the bribe should be big enough.

After locking the boat I made one more round of the deck before going up to the bridge to turn in on the lounge seat in the chart house. In the bow I found José on watch and to my question he answered that he had neither seen nor heard anything stirring on shore. At the foot of the bridge ladder I came upon Dorgan smoking a pipe and nursing his splint-bound arm.

"Trouble?" I queried, halting to look him over.

"She's achin' like hell," he returned, meaning the broken arm, "and I reckoned I might as well get up and smoke me a pipe."

The big fellow's patience under his woundings made me feel uncomfortably conscience-stricken.

"I'm mighty sorry I broke your arm, Dorgan," I said. "I didn't mean to cripple you as bad as that."

"I ain't a-kickin', am I?" he returned good-naturedly. "It was a free-for-all and somebody had to get the worst of it. Besides, I ain't forgettin' that you lugged me up out o' the *Vesta's* cabin to give me a show for my life when we all thought she was goin' to Davy Jones. But about these cusses on shore. Reckon they got them rifles out o' the schooner afore they burned her?"

"Your guess is as good as anybody's," I said. "But there's this about it—we'll probably find out in the morning. If they have the guns they'll be taking pot shots at us from the beach."

"Say, lookee here," he put in curiously; "you told me this mornin' that this here Jeffreys pup would try to get the wimmen back; is it bad enough to be a fight for blood?"

"It is just that. Unless Jeffreys can take Miss Carter back to the United States as his wife he can't go back himself."

"Huh!" he said. "Reckon you could make that a little plainer?"

"It's a long story but I can give you the nib of it. Jeffreys and his father have been doing crooked work and Miss Carter's father is the one who can make them do time for it. But his hands will be tied if his daughter is married to young Jeffreys. That's the whole plot in a nutshell."

"But he can't *make* the gal marry him if she don't want to."

"He can make her wish she'd never been born," I said and he took my meaning.

"Why, the damn' dirty hound!" he said. "If I could get holt of him with this one good hand o' mine——"

"I feel a good bit that way myself," I cut in. "Maybe one or both of us will get a chance before the show is over. We'll be hearing from him shortly."

Dorgan turned to scan the distant shore line looming faintly in the darkness.

"That li'l' bird," he said, meaning José; "I shouldn't wonder if he wouldn't be a good enough li'l' hellion in a scrap. But this here's a time when there ortn't to be nobody but a white man on watch—somebody 'at's goin' to be derved sure not to forgit and go to sleep. You tell José to turn in and I'll stand his watch and call you at midnight 'r so."

It will be understood that I had no fear of treachery on Dorgan's part, by this time, so I gave the order as he suggested. And when I had seen the crippled giant begin a slow march back and forth between the bits forward and the bridge ladder I climbed to the chart room and turned in, not doubting Dorgan's loyalty any more than I did my own.

When Dorgan awakened me I found that his "midnight or so" had stretched to the small hours of the morning.

"Anything stirring?" I asked.

"They're on," he reported. "Couple of hours ago some of 'em come along with torches and found the stuff we put ashore. Looked as if they was luggin' it all off somewhere—back around the headland."

"That settles it," I said. "They know we're here—unless they think we've gone to sea in the *Vesta's* boat. It's a small matter. They'd know it anyway when we try to get steam on the yacht."

"Reckon we can make out to do that?" he asked.

"We've got it to do," I told him; where-

upon I descended to the deck to take my turn at the sentry go.

It proved to be a lonely watch. Toward morning the thin sickle of a dying moon rose out of the sea and in the ghostly half light the yacht, the silvered sea, the white line of the beach and the background of dense tropical jungle figured as the stage setting in a weird spectacle, lacking nothing but the people of the play. What would the day now lingering just beyond the eastern horizon bring forth? Rather feverishly I fell to estimating or trying to estimate the time it would take to pump the yacht free of water—if we should be lucky enough to get steam on the boilers and set the pumps at work. And if we should succeed in getting the water out of her would the twin screws develop power enough to back her off the shoal? Only the trial actual would answer that question. A greater power than any man-made engines could develop had driven the steel hull into the sand; would the hurricane demons, looking on from whatever upper world to which they had withdrawn, laugh mockingly at our puny efforts to undo their work?

At the first graying of the dawn I took my stand in the sharp prow and swept the shore line with the glass. The red glow from the burning schooner had long since died out of the western sky and in all the wide prospect the grounded yacht alone spoke of the presence of humankind or the works of man. As the beach line came into clearer view I was able to confirm Dorgan's report as to the removal of the supplies we had put ashore. They had all disappeared.

Just before sunrise I called Brill and the two sailors and tapped on the door of Alison's stateroom and asked her to wake Hedda, who had volunteered to serve as ship's cook. Taking a leaf out of the book of the probabilities I argued that the liquor orgy of the previous day, followed, as it doubtless was, by a gorging feast on the provisions we had put ashore, would make it pretty difficult for Jeffreys to get his forces in action until after the effects of the carouse had worn off. With one uninterrupted day I thought we might clear the fire hold of water; and with that accomplished we could put fire under the boilers and set the power pumps at work.

While Hedda was cooking breakfast I dropped into the engine room for another look at the machinery. Though I had taken

the course in civil engineering in college and had majored in that branch I had always had a strong mechanical turn and on the one short voyage I had made in the *Waikiki* as a guest of the Carters I had spent most of the time in the engine room—gaining a bit of experience which was now about to prove invaluable. What would have been merely “gadgets” to other men—and to me, for that matter, if I hadn’t previously made their acquaintance—were now parts of a familiar mechanism with which I had once eaten and slept.

As I have said before the machinery, or so much of it as I could get at with half a foot of water on the floor, seemed to be uninjured by the shock of the grounding; and after I had overhauled the bilge pumps and ascertained the possibility of getting steam to them without any hand bailing I climbed back to the deck and was just in time to meet Alison as she came out of the main cabin. If she had made me pay for my passionate outburst of the night by putting me in a class with Wickham Jeffreys, I couldn’t have blamed her. But there was nothing in her greeting to show that she even remembered the outburst.

“I hope the pirate captain rested well,” she said, with the grimacing little smile that was always, for me, one of her most alluring charms. And then: “When do we sail?”

“I wish I could tell you,” I returned, trying, rather ineffectually I’m afraid, to match her cheerful mood, “but I can answer only in negatives. It won’t be to-day.”

In a flash the cheerful mood vanished. “Poor daddy!” she said and her lip trembled; and then again: “Poor, poor daddy! It breaks my heart, Dick, to think how he must be suffering! And it may be days and days before we can get to him.”

“But, see here,” I said, trying to comfort her, “since that letter was a forgery, you don’t know positively that he is in Cuba.”

“No; I only know that he said in a former letter that he would return by way of Cuba.”

“But that was indefinite as to time, wasn’t it? And even if he has left Honduras and is now in Havana he may not have heard of the possible loss of the *Waikiki* and even if he has heard of it he has no reason to suppose that you were on board—inasmuch as he didn’t write that letter you thought he wrote.”

“Oh, dear me! that is so,” she said with a deep sigh of relief. “I am still all tangled up and bewildered and I keep on forgetting. Of course he wouldn’t know that I was in the yacht—at least not unless he has cabled to New York and found out in that way.”

“We’ll hope he hasn’t cabled and we’ll also hope that we are going to float the *Waikiki* before Wickham Jeffreys thinks up some scheme to stop us.”

“Do you know anything more than you did last night?” she queried.

“Only that they have found the provisions and clothing and have carried them away from the beach. Which means that they know we are here in the yacht or have been here.”

“But they can’t come off to us without a boat.”

“No,” I said.

We had been walking slowly aft as we talked, expecting momentarily to hear Hedda beating the gong to summon us to breakfast. At the taffrail Alison leaned over to look down at the water. When she turned to face me her lips were pale.

“Dick!” she gasped; “where is *our* boat?”

I sprang to the rail and looked over. The whaleboat was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

UNDER FIRE.

I think I had never before so fully grasped the meaning of the word “consternation” as I did when I looked over the rail and found that the whaleboat, the one thing which had given us our supremacy over a boatless enemy, had disappeared in the night. In whose watch, Dorgan’s or mine, it had been taken we could not tell, but it was gone. Some member of Jeffreys’ carousing crew had remained sober enough to swim off to the shoal and in spite of our vigilance had contrived to get away with the boat.

Immediately after breakfast, which in view of our loss was a silent and hurried meal, I drew Dorgan aside.

“You warned me to look out for Brill,” I began. “Did he have a hand in the theft of the whaleboat?”

Dorgan scowled. “I wouldn’t put it a-past Isra’l—if he thought he could make anything by it. He’s mighty sore over the

loss o' the hooker and her cargo. What makes you think he's mixed up in this boat business?"

"Because yesterday I found a piece of chain and a padlock in the engine-room supply chest and last night before turning in I locked the boat to the yacht's rail. The lock and chain are both gone."

"Put the key in your pocket?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Is it there now?"

"No."

"Somebody frisked you in the night and I'm right much afeard it was Isra'l. If it was I don't get off none too easy, myself."

"How is that?"

"Just a little while afore I went off watch and called you, Isra'l come paddin' round up for'ard in his bare feet, cussin' a few lines and sayin' he couldn't sleep for thinkin' over how much he'd lost in the schooner. Just as he was leavin' he asked whereabouts you'd bunked down and I didn't have no better sense than to tell him you was asleep up in the chart room."

"I guess that explains it," I said gloomily. "The loss of the boat probably means that we'll have a bloody fight on our hands, and if it comes to, that I'll see to it that Brill is the first man on the yacht to stop a bullet!"

Just what Brill's part in the theft of the boat had been we never learned. Probably the man who had swum off to the yacht had convinced him that Jeffreys would make it worth his while to steal the key; and quite as probably the reason why Brill had not gone with the boat was that the ambassador thought a friend aboard the yacht would be more valuable to Jeffreys than another hand ashore.

Not to lose any more of the time which had now become precious, the job of bailing the fire hold was started at once. Under my directions José and Pedro rigged a snatch-block hoist on the small crane used normally to hoist ashes out of the firing pit. Under the beak of this crane an inclosed shaft ran down to the fire room, and the steel ash hopper was made to serve as a bailing bucket.

In the division of labor I sent the two sailors below to fill the bucket and gave Brill the hot end, making him man the crank of the crane-hoisting drum. At first he wasn't going to do it, exploding in an eruption of rabid profanity and swearing

that he'd die before he would tackle a roustabout's job for me or anybody. But when I pulled the old army pistol on him and told him shortly that he might have his choice at once, he grabbed the crank and proved conclusively that he was not yet ready to die.

I confess I got a good bit of malicious satisfaction out of the next hour and a half or so, during which time Brill toiled and sweated at the crank of the ash hoist. Since there was no room for two men on the crank I contributed my moderate share to the job by dumping the water-filled hopper as it came up, chinking in the intervals of hoistings and lowerings with haster-prompting tongue-lashings designed to make the crank winder sweat still more profusely.

In the course of time and much sooner than I expected José called up to say that the water was below the firing stands, and Brill staggered away from the windlass, cursing bitterly and saying he would kill me for this when his chance came. As he shuffled away Dorgan came aft to say that there were men on the beach and that they seemed to be trying to signal the yacht.

Shouting down to José to tell him to build fires under the boilers I went forward with Dorgan. We had scarcely shown ourselves in the bow of the yacht before a bullet whined overhead and smacked into the woodwork of the bridge some second or two before the report of the gun came to our ears.

"That answers our question about the *Vesta's* rifles," I said, dropping out of sight behind the bulwarks and dragging Dorgan down with me. "You remember what I told you about that fellow's shooting. He'll get the range in the next trial or so."

"I reckon we ain't got no partic'lar business up for'ard, nohow," Dorgan remarked, beginning to crawl back on his knees and one hand. "Here's hopin' this play boat's bow platin' is thick enough to stop a rifle ball."

Of course the hull plating was armor plate to rifle bullets at long range but the bulwarks were not. The next shot came through less than three feet above the deck level, struck the iron castpan, glancing off to bite a piece out of the ladder leading to the bridge. As the yacht was lying head on to the island and with her bow lifted by her position on the shoal, only the bridge and some portion of the forward

deck were exposed to a direct fire from the low shore; and as Dorgan said, we had no particular business in that part of the ship at present.

Hastening aft I warned Alison to keep under cover, explaining that the guns we had hoped were burned in the *Vesta* had evidently been salvaged.

"What is Wickham trying to do—murder us all?" she asked.

"He would probably be glad to murder everybody but you and Hedda. But we are safe enough so long as he shoots from the beach. Keep your woman under cover and stay there yourself."

"But you and your men?" she protested.

"Our job is below for the present. Dorgan will keep watch for us and nothing can happen unless they use the whaleboat and try to board us. And they'll hardly venture that in daylight."

By this time José and Pedro had their fires started and the black smoke was pouring from the yacht's tall funnel. Descending to the fire room I found that there was water enough in the boilers to make them safe until we could get steam to pump with. Beyond this there was a trying interval of waiting for the steam pressure to rise. Starting upon cold water it seemed as though the roaring fires in the furnaces would never take hold.

Knowing Jeffreys fairly well, and the lengths to which he had already gone, I did not underrate his shrewdness or the measure of his desperation. He was in the situation of a man who had burned all his bridges; and the smoke pouring from our funnel was serving notice upon him that what he did he must do quickly. Time and again as I came up from anxiously watching the steam gauges I cautioned Dorgan, keeping a lookout from a safe shelter on the hurricane deck, not to let any movement on shore escape him.

Beginning with the shot that had told us he was armed Jeffreys had fired a few rounds in rapid succession and after that he kept up a desultory fire, perhaps one shot every five or ten minutes; just often enough to let us know that any one of us showing himself would get his quietus. But as yet there had been no move made to bring the whaleboat around from wherever they had it hidden.

Since even a watched pot will boil if it be watched long enough the gauges finally

showed sufficient pressure to enable us to blow the fires; and after that it was only a short time until I was able to start the bilge pumps. Half an hour, with both of the big pumps delivering full streams outboard, sufficed to drain the after hold and engine-room sump, and then I turned the pumping battery on the compartments forward of the fire room and coal bunkers.

At noon, while Jeffreys still kept up his irregular popping at us from the distant beach, Hedda, calm-eyed and apparently altogether undisturbed by the battle conditions, fed us on the job, carrying food and hot coffee not only to the sailors in the fire room but also to Dorgan on watch on the hurricane deck. Alison brought my dinner down to me in the engine room and her own with it, so we ate together to a thumping accompaniment from the laboring pumps. Like Hedda, my dear girl was perfectly cool and collected; she even wanted to know if I wouldn't let her relieve Dorgan at his watch, saying that we mustn't forget that the big man was still suffering from the broken arm.

"Dorgan wouldn't hear to it," I replied; then I told her about the wife he had left behind in Jacksonville and how he had made me his executor when we thought the *Vesta* was going to be lost in the storm.

"That shows just how much good there may be in the worst of us," she said. "He looks like an ogre and talks like one, but I'd trust him. The other man is the one I'm most afraid of."

"Brill? He is bad—with the hopeless badness of a complete coward. I'd throw him overboard and make him swim ashore if we were not going to need what he knows about navigating a ship."

"If we get off, will you trust him to navigate the *Waikiki*?"

"Not without somebody to hold a gun on him, you may be sure. He picked my pocket last night when I was asleep in the chart room and stole the key of the whaleboat for whoever it was that got it. I'm not certain that it wouldn't have been a good riddance if he had gone ashore with the thief."

Silence through the eating of another of Hedda's deliciously browned biscuits, and then: "Are you going to be able to float the *Waikiki*, Dick?"

"That is still on the knees of the high gods. So far as I can tell the hull is sound

and the pumping will take an enormous weight out of her. But, after all, we may not be able to move her with the engines."

"How soon will you know?"

"José says the water is going down pretty fast in the forehold. We ought to be able to try our luck by the middle of the afternoon."

"Will it take long, after you begin?"

"That too is on the knees of the gods."

"What will you do if you fail?"

"Try again and keep on trying."

"But when it comes night—"

"I know. Jeffreys will fill the boat with his ruffians and try to board us—at least that is what I'd do if I were in his place. In that case we fight."

"But they are armed."

"So are we," I said; but I didn't tell her that all the arms we had were the two revolvers I had taken from Brill in the capture of the schooner and that all the ammunition we had were the six cartridges in each of the big pistols.

"Bloodshed!" she said, with a little shiver.

"If they will have it, yes. And that brings us to something else. If we are lucky enough to float the yacht and get away in her I shall have no scruples whatever about leaving Jeffreys and the men of his outfit on the island until we can send somebody to take them off. But the women—the *Waikiki* belongs to your father and you are his representative. Whatever you say is what we shall try to do."

"I don't owe that miserable lot anything at all—not even Peggy Sefton," she said. "Of course if we could take them without running any additional risk—but I hardly see how that can be done."

"Nor I," I agreed. "But we'll see when the time comes."

As I had predicted it was mid-afternoon before the bilge pumps sucked dry to tell us that the yacht was free of water. Waiting only long enough to let the two Minorcans clean their fires and get a good head of steam on I started the yacht's engines in the reverse motion, letting them turn over slowly until they were thoroughly warmed up. Then I opened the throttles to full speed astern and held my breath. For five minutes, ten, fifteen, the twin screws thrashed and turned and churned, but there was no movement of the ship. The sand still held us in its grapple.

Shutting off the power at last and telling José to bank his fires, I went on deck. Dorgan met me at the ladder hatch, shaking his bandaged head.

"She never budged an inch," he said. "What's next?"

"The next thing is to shift every movable pound of weight aft. Where's Brill?"

"Search me. I ain't seen him since you turned him loose fr'm windin' that winch crank this mornin'."

Calling José and Pedro up from the fire room I set them at work carrying every weighty thing they could lay hands on to the after part of the ship. Then I went in search of Brill and found him snoring peacefully in one of the bunks in the sailors' quarters. A hearty kick brought him up standing with a yell and an oath but before he could mouth the second oath I was running him out at the point of the pistol and shoving him into line with the two Minorcans. Then I got in myself.

It would say itself that in a well-ordered pleasure yacht there wouldn't be many movables apart from the pig-iron ballast in the hold, and while we were shifting the pigs I was cudgeling my brain to think of some expedient to loosen the grip of the shoal. In the mad haste of the moment—haste made madder when Dorgan came stumping down to tell us that the shore people had brought the whaleboat around and were piling into it—I thought of the water-jet device used by bridge builders in sinking piles or a caisson in sand. There was a small fire pump in the engine room and with time in which to connect lines of piping—and immunity from the nagging rifle fire while we were about it—it seemed that such a contrivance might be made to loosen the sand around the hull. But as it now appeared, time was going to be denied us.

It was not until Dorgan came a second time to tell us that the whaleboat, filled with men, had shoved off from the beach that I gave the order to stop the ballast shifting.

"On deck—you and Pedro!" I shouted to José and followed them up the ladder, driving Brill ahead of me.

When we got out to where we could see, Dorgan's report was confirmed. The loaded boat had left the beach but it was not coming directly toward us; it was steering to the right and the men manning the

oars were not hurrying. With the glass we could count the occupants. There were six of them; four at the oars, one steering and the sixth man appeared to be kneeling in the bow of the boat. While we looked a faint puff of gray smoke broke out from the whaleboat's bow and the only whole pane of glass left in the *Waikiki's* chart room fell out in a tinkling shower of fragments.

At this Jeffreys' purpose became disquietingly obvious. He meant to circumnavigate us at a safe distance, pecking at us with his rifle fire from many different angles. He doubtless guessed by this time that we had no guns with which to answer him; knew also that if he could get astern of the yacht in a position where the seaward inclination of the hull would favor instead of baffling him he could drive us all below and hold us there while his oarsmen made the boarding dash.

It was a shrewd maneuver, holding every promise of success. As the laden whaleboat swung slowly in its circling course the crack and smoke puff came at regular intervals from her bow and our exposed afterdeck lounge speedily became uninhabitable. To put them beyond any possible danger from the flying bullets I sent Alison and Hedda down to the engine room, which was below the water line, and the five of us who remained took refuge in the cabin, Brill groveling on the floor in a ridiculous and contemptible agony of terror as the bullets came tearing through the upper body of the cabin. As the fusillade gave us leave Dorgan and I kept the movements of the whaleboat in view, expecting momentarily to see its bow turn toward us and the four slowly swinging oars dig for the attacking dash.

But the dash did not come. It was my guess that Jeffreys could not screw the nerve of his hired ruffians to the sticking point. I was quite ready to absolve him from any particular charge of bloodthirstiness in his persistent rifle practice. He had two perfectly defensible objects in view—defensible from his standpoint; one was to reclaim his hostage in the person of Alison Carter and the other to regain possession of the yacht now that our firing of the boilers had made it evident that she was whole and might be floated. Doubtless he fancied he could wear us out by keeping us under the incessant strain and that eventually we would give up and signal him to come aboard. Be this

as it may the circling course was held until the circle was completed; and when the long and nerve-wracking bombardment paused our damage proved to be strictly material. The bulwarks and top works of the yacht were punctured and bored in every direction but nobody had been hit, even by flying splinters.

Dorgan was growling sourly as we emerged from the riddled cabin.

"I sure reckoned they was goin' to give us a chance at 'em that time," he complained. "This everlastin' popgun business is gettin' on my sore nerve!"

"It is clouding up," I pointed out. "It will soon be too dark to let him see his gun sights." Then as untechnically as possible I outlined my plan of trying to free the yacht by the use of high-pressure water jets directed into the sand around the bow.

"Water pipes?" he said. "How you goin' to work 'em? You got to have light to do it by and if there's light enough for us there'll be light enough for that skunk on the beach to see to shoot by."

There was much truth in that but it was a case of nothing venture, nothing have. In the matter of light we had all we wanted below decks, and could have had it above if we had dared use the searchlight on the bridge. During the bilge pumping I had taken time to overhaul the electric plant and put it in order, and now as the clouds thickened to darken the heavens I started the dynamo and by the light thus furnished we began to whip things into shape for the force-pump experiment.

Considering it afterward I was surprised and humiliated to remember that I clung so desperately to the water-jet expedient when a much simpler and more promising one lay ready to our hands. But obsessions are curious things, amounting at times to a mild species of insanity. With the feverish persistence of a single-track mind I ransacked the yacht for material with which to construct the necessary line of piping and was forced finally to eke it out with splicings of fire hose.

And when the thing was done—which was not until long after the cloud-thickening darkness of an approaching storm had been made Stygian by the coming of night—and the force pump was started, the experiment was a sorry failure. In the first place the small force pump would not supply enough water to fill the various no-

zles and in the second, when we sought to substitute pressure for quantity the various patched-up couplings wouldn't hold it. And while we were still working and sweating over the botch job, the Minorcans and I, with Dorgan standing by to do our swearing for us, Alison came running to tell us that trouble of some sort was brewing again; that the men on the beach had built a small fire and by the light of it they seemed to be manning the whaleboat.

Now a night attack, when the attackers might hope to get within grappling distance of us without being seen, was what I had been expecting—and dreading. If Jeffreys could whip all the men members of his party, guests and sailors, into line and crowd them into the whaleboat they would outnumber us two to one; or rather vastly more; since Dorgan had only one arm and there was no reason to suppose that Brill could be made to fight, even with Dorgan's pistol or mine to put the fear of death into him.

Menaced by the double danger of an attack from the island and the still more terrifying threat of the coming storm which would surely complete the wreck of the stranded yacht, swift escape seemed to be the only hope for us; and it was then, at the eleventh hour so to speak, when there was no time to put it into effect, that the simple expedient I have spoken of, or the conception of it, came crashing into my brain like the bolt from a crossbow.

"Dorgan!" I cried. "We ought both to be bored for the hollow horn! *The anchors!*"

CHAPTER XII.

STORM AND CALM.

"Whadda you mean—anchors?" said Dorgan. "I reckon I don't get you."

"Don't you see?" I burst out. "With two anchors hanging at the bows we haven't had sense enough to carry them aft, drop them astern and put the steam capstan to the cables. And now these devils won't give us time to do it. But, by Heaven, we can try!"

That was the signal for a frenzied outbreak of labor that put all our former toilings to shame. The *Waikiki's* anchors were of the modern stockless type, cut-down models of those with which the big liners are equipped, and they were extra heavy for the yacht's tonnage. There was only

one way to carry them aft and that was by means of a float of some sort buoyant enough to support the weight, together with the drag of the cable as it should be paid out through the hawse hole at the bow.

Like most pleasure craft of her size the yacht had a life raft in her safety equipment, and luckily this had not been carried away when she struck the shoal. It was the work of a few minutes only to cut the lashings and put the raft over the side. Very coolly and courageously Alison took her place at the bow to watch for us, while José and Pedro and I towed the raft into position under the starboard anchor, with Brill, driven to it by the threat of a pistol in Dorgan's good hand—Dorgan's, mind you—riding the float to guide it to its place and hold it steady while we lowered the anchor upon it.

Though we were working in darkness—not daring to show a light on deck—the first half of the undertaking went through without a hitch. Though there was no wind as yet there was an ominous increase in the ground swell and this made Brill's part of the job, holding the raft in place while we eased the anchor down upon it, rather perilous. Nevertheless the thing was accomplished successfully and the raft proved to be buoyant enough to support not only the weight of the anchor but Brill's weight in addition; so we made him stay aboard to fend off as Pedro and I, with Hedda the strong to help, towed the tittipping float aft, José paying out the cable through the bow hawse hole as we went. Along toward the end the drag of the increasing length of cable was terrific and I doubt if we could have made it if Dorgan had not come to tail in on the towline.

Under compulsion—still under compulsion, as always—Brill tilted the raft and let the anchor slide into the deep water beneath the stern; then under the same sort of persuasion he handed the floating platform around under the yacht's overhang so that we might tow it forward on the port side. While we were hurriedly taking the lashings off the port anchor to repeat the process with it Alison broke in upon us, shaking with excitement.

"They are coming!" she announced breathlessly. "I can't see a thing—they've put their fire out—but I can hear the oars in the rowlocks!"

"Get below!" I ordered, "and take Hedda

with you!" but I could not stop to see that she obeyed. If the whaleboat was on the way our time was short indeed. "Lower away—quick!" I snapped at José, who was handling the cable with the forward bits for a snubbing post, and it was at this critical juncture that the quick-witted little man's dexterity failed him. In some manner the cable got away from him and the heavy anchor dropped like a plummet.

There was a splintering crash as the anchor fell upon and demolished the raft, a gurgling imprecation from Brill as the sea swallowed him and the catastrophe was a fact accomplished. As will readily be seen this accident left us in worse case than we were before. In addition to being stranded the yacht was now solidly anchored, fore and aft. And a low murmur on the windless air told us that the threatened storm was coming.

During the toiling interval in which we had been trying to make the water-jet expedient work we had kept the fires going under the boilers, and it was a hoarse roar of steam from the safety-valve escape pipe that drove me into action. I thought it might be barely possible that by winching on the one anchor astern, and adding the sternward pull of the twin screws, there was still some small chance that we might claw off the shoal before it was too late. While Pedro was throwing a line to Brill spluttering and swearing in the water under the bows I put Dorgan in command.

"I'm going to try to pull her with the single anchor," I said, shouting to make myself heard above the raucous bellowing of the escape pipe. "Have José and Pedro throw a few turns of the cable around the capstan and be ready to take in when I put the power on. Let the other cable go slack so it can pay out if she starts. Knock Brill into it, too, if he's fit to do anything after he's fished up."

"Aye can help, too," said a voice at my ear and then I saw that Hedda had not gone aft to the cabin with her mistress.

"Good girl!" I applauded; "it'll take all the hands we can muster. Jump to it—everybody!" And then I ran aft to go down to the engine room to do my part with the machinery.

In the excitement of the moment I had temporarily forgotten the other menace—the approach of the whaleboat. Now as I was running down the port side between the

raised deck and the rail I thought of it and wondered if Jeffreys would have the steady nerve it would ask for if he should try to board the yacht in the rising sea which was already gurgling in the scuppers on the down-tilted side of the vessel and also in the face of an approaching storm. I was telling myself that he hadn't any such nerve when above the noise of the escaping steam and the whistling of the mounting wind in the wire rigging overhead I heard my name called; just two ear-piercing words: "Oh, Dick!"

As well as if I could have seen her peril I knew what those two words meant. They were a call for help and three bounds took me to the companion stair. In two more I was in the storm-battered white-and-gold dining saloon which was lighted by the single incandescent bulb—the only remnant of the ceiling electrolier I had been able to restore in my overhauling of the electric plant.

Withdrawn into the farthest corner of the room Alison was facing a man who had laid his rifle aside to have both hands free and as I burst in I heard him say: "Stop that shrieking and come along with me! If Ainsley interferes again I'll kill him! Don't you know there's a storm coming and the yacht will go to pieces in it? Come on, I say—if you make me put my hands on you what else—"

That was as far as he got. In a white-hot fury I forgot the perilous situation of the yacht and the fact that every moment's delay made it more perilous; forgot everything but the one blood-boiling urge to slay this damnable plotter who had stolen a march on us and was threatening the woman I loved.

"Turn around and put your hands on me!" I shouted; and when he whirled to face me I saw that he was no longer the debonair, smooth-shaven idler who had coldly pronounced the sentence of exile upon me in the lobby of the Brown Palace in Denver; gaunt, haggard and with eyes ablaze, with the jaunty yachting flannels hanging in rags, he looked more like an escaped convict cornered and ready to fight to the death.

"I said I'd kill you and I will!" he cried and sprang for the gun he had laid on the cabin table. But before he could snatch it up I had swept it aside and we clinched and went down together.

It is curious to note how the primitive in human nature asserts itself when that most primitive of all springs of action, the defense of the woman beloved, comes into play. Burned, blasted, devastated with a mad desire to kill Wickham Jeffreys as a fit ending to the struggle; blind and oblivious to all the humaner promptings; I was obsessed by the savage and most un-Christian idea that I must first gouge out the eyes that had dared to look upon my love, and tear out the tongue that had threatened her, and cripple the hands that were to have been laid upon her in desecration—mere bedlam madness of passion, all this, but it sufficed to make me forget the revolver thrust under my belt which I might have drawn and clubbed and with a single blow ended the maniacal struggle on the cabin floor.

But if I was forgetting the weapon, Jeffreys wasn't. From the instant of the clinch and fall he had been trying to get hold of it and as we rolled over and over in the death grapple he continued to try. Let me say here and now that I hold no grudge against him for what he did. He was fighting for his life and he knew it. I had beaten the mouth of threatenings, and stuck a thumb into one of the offending eyes, and was cracking the bones of one of the sacrilegious hands when with the fingers of the other hand he found the butt of the revolver. Berserk as I was I still had sense enough to try to twist aside when I felt the muzzle of the pistol pressed against my body. Then came the ear-deadening crash of the explosion and Jeffreys tore himself free and sprang to his feet.

I was hit and I knew it but even if the wound had been a fatal one I think that the mad rage still possessing me would have enabled me to leap up, as I did, and to fling myself at him. But he did not wait for the second grapple, nor did he fire again. With a cry that was like the snarl of a wounded animal he flung the pistol at my head and dashed up the companion steps in flight; and with the battle madness still sustaining me I was fairly at his heels when he tumbled over the rail into the whaleboat which, in the rapidly roughening sea, two of the *Waikiki's* sailors were striving to hold in its place at the yacht's side.

What happened after that fills only a hazy spot in my memory. Whether I saw the whaleboat swept away from the side

on the crest of a sea, or only knew that it must be swept away when the men in it loosed their hold on the yacht's rail, I cannot say. Out of the thickening cloud which seemed to be settling down upon my brain and blotting out even the details of the late savage struggle in the cabin there emerged only one fixed impulse: I had started for the engine room to set the machinery in motion and thither I must go before the storm which either was, or seemed to my distorted brain to be, already bursting upon us in blinding flashes of lightning and deafening crashes of thunder, should annihilate us.

How I ever got down into the yacht's engine room I do not know, but at the next emergence from the thickening mental cloud I found myself opening the throttles to start the engines in the reverse and working the trampling machinery up to full speed astern. When the steel hull was humming and vibrating to the powerful backward thrust of the twin propellers, another blank intervened, and at a second lucid interval I discovered with a sort of bewildered amazement that I was manipulating the valves and levers of the steam anchor capstan, quite mechanically, as it seemed, and with no clear idea of what I was doing it for.

Once more the cloud curtain shut down and I knew no more until the stroke of a gong in the closely shut-in space spurred me alive. *Clang-clang* it went, and almost at once, *clang-clang* again. Like a child whose ears have been boxed to make him pay attention, I realized dumbly that the summons was for me; that the double clang repeated was the signal for full speed ahead. Clumsily, because my hands seemed to be all thumbs and singularly useless, I spun the throttle wheels, pulled the reversing lever over into the go-ahead position, and reopened the throttles. And after that, the curtain came down and stayed down.

Coherence, or consciousness, or whatever you like to call it, came next when I opened my eyes and found them staring blankly at a white ceiling that seemed to be rocking gently and slowly endwise. Next I saw that the sun was shining in upon the foot of the brass bed in which I was lying; looking in through a round port which stood open and through which I could hear the swish and die away of swiftly passing wavelets.

Not until after I had marked the sway-

ing ceiling and the sunshine did I realize that my body seemed to be gripped in an iron corset; gripped and held immovable. But my head was still free and though it asked for an effort mightier than that exerted by old Atlas carrying the world on his shoulders I contrived to turn it on the pillow.

"Don't, dear; don't try to move," cautioned a low voice from somewhere in the room and then I saw her dimly, standing beside the bed; and presently a gentle hand was slipped under my head to help me to roll it back straight—a task which I felt wholly unable to master by myself.

"What's happened to me?" I demanded querulously. "Why can't I see any better?"

She was sitting on the edge of the bed now and she had one of my hands and was stroking it.

"It is just weakness, Dick, dear. You nearly bled to death before Dorgan and José found you in the engine room. Didn't you know that Wickham shot you?"

By the supremest effort I was able to remember that much.

"Yes; but after that?"

"After that you went down into the engine room and did all the things you meant to do—and you fairly dying on your feet! But it was just like you."

"Did I—did we get the yacht off the shoal?"

"It was just as you planned it. The one anchor held and pulled us off, and then Brill unshackled the cables and let them both go. We were just in time. A few minutes later, just after the yacht's head was got around to meet it, the storm came. But we ran out of it in the night."

"When was all this?" I asked feebly.

"Night before last."

"And where are we now?"

"A few miles off a point of land which Brill says marks the entrance to Bahía Honda on the northern coast of Cuba. He says we'll be in Havana harbor before dark."

"But I don't understand!" I protested weakly. "Who is running the yacht?"

"Dorgan is first mate and chief engineer. He says he doesn't know a thing about the machinery but you set it going and all he has had to do was to keep it oiled and keep water in the boilers and fire under them. José has helped a lot, too. It seems he was

once a fireman for a time on a Spanish merchant vessel."

"And Brill has the bridge?"

"Yes; and he's been just like a lamb ever since he came, so near being killed by the falling anchor. I haven't heard him swear once."

"All right," I said, whispering because there wasn't strength enough left in me to make a real voice noise. "All's well that ends well. You don't have to marry Wickham Jeffreys, at any rate; and that's the main thing." Then: "Alison, dear, I think the 'other man' owes me something; don't you?"

"What other man?"

"The one you're going to marry some time, you know; you haven't told me his name."

"But I did tell you that he doesn't care for me."

"Are you sure he doesn't?"

"I thought I was sure of it when I told you so."

"But now?"

"But now I know he does care and—and—oh, Dick! you mustn't die! And you must forget all about daddy's money—which isn't mine and maybe never will be! Haven't you known, all along, that you were the 'other man'?"

Truly I was more than half dead but I should have had to be altogether dead and in my coffin if I hadn't been able to reach up and pull her down beside me. And it might have been two minutes, or five, or half an hour later when she said:

"You mustn't, Dickie, dear: I l-like your arms, but if you strain yourself and make your wound start bleeding again—it isn't bandaged very well."

"Who bandaged it?" I asked, knowing well the answer I wanted to hear.

"I did. I don't know much about such things but I did the best I could. There was iodine in the yacht's medicine chest and I used a lot of that."

"How bad is it?"

"Oh, it's an awful thing! The bullet went all around your left side and came out at the back. It was wicked—*wicked!*"

"Oh, I don't know," I said. "Jeffreys was getting his when he did it. If he isn't a one-eyed cripple with false front teeth from now on it won't be through any fault of mine. I tried to pay him all that was coming to him from you and your father,

with something on my own account, while I was at it. But let's forget him and the island where he and his crowd are safe to stay until we send for them, and talk about something else. What's worrying me is what your father will say when we—when I tell him that his daughter has fallen in love with a common, everyday, shot-up construction engineer."

But I needn't have worried about that. When we reached Havana and found that good old Father Hiram was actually there after all—having just arrived from Honduras—and I had been carted to a hospital, and all the crooked tangles had been straightened out, I suddenly found myself made vice president of the Carter Construction Company, with power to act—or at least such was to be my status after I was well enough to make the journey in the *Wai-kiki* back to New York.

"We're going to have a hard job of it, Son Dick, putting the old company back on its feet after all the robbery and crookedness that's been going on," was the way the dear old citizen put it up to me the day he came to my room in the hospital to tell me what was what. And then he added: "I owe you a lot more than a share in the business, my boy. If it hadn't been for you—"

I laughed as heartily as my sore side would let me.

"For me, and Dorgan, and the unwilling bootlegger skipper, and the two Minorcans, and the old *Vesta*, and a whaling lot of

miracles thrown in for good measure!" I qualified. "And that reminds me; I want to do something for Dorgan and the two Minorcans; and while Brill was half a scoundrel, through it all, I wouldn't mind including him."

"They are all here, waiting under pay, until you can get up and tell them what you want them to do and be."

"That's fine!" I said. "Dorgan and Brill are both jolly pirates, but we can use them on some decent job, I'm sure. Perhaps you even would be good-natured enough to make a start by chartering a boat and sending them to take Jeffreys and his party off the island. Of course we don't owe Jeffreys anything like a good turn, but there are women with him—"

"I've been thinking about that," interrupted the fine old boy. "I'll do it—with the hope of never seeing Jeffreys again."

"As for the two Spaniards, they're pure gold," I said.

"I'll take good care of them," he remarked, smiling.

"That settles it all but what you said about owing me; there's no owing business about it, Father Hiram," I continued. "Hasn't Alison told you she's going to marry me? That makes me your poor debtor and hers, a thousand times over."

"All right, Richard—if you think so," was the quiet reply.

And I not only thought so then; I still think so to this good day.

"The Halt and the Blind," a complete book-length novel by Edison Marshall, in the next POPULAR, April 20th.



FOR MARRIED MEN ONLY

IT was a sweltering afternoon in June. In the chamber of the United States Senate the heat bothered the lawmakers already bothered by the tariff. The clerk, reading the schedules in the bill, came to "hooks and eyes." Senator Morris Sheppard of Texas sprang to meet the challenge of "hooks and eyes." So well did he meet it that, if he ever runs for president, he will get the vote of every married man in the country.

"Mr. President," he said, "hooks and eyes are a crude, unsatisfactory, baffling and bedeviling means of fastening dresses, as most married men will testify. It is an industry that should not be encouraged by a protective tariff.

"Let us hope that modern progress, having furnished us wireless telegraphy, heatless cookery, and the horseless carriage, will next discover the hookless and eyeless dress. Hooks and eyes are made of brass, plated with tin, coated with japan, located with difficulty, and connected with the most strenuous and agonizing endeavor. They are made by automatic machinery. Would they could be fastened, Mr. President, in the same way! From the experience I have had, it seems to me that the number of hooks and eyes on each dress is almost infinite and hopelessly invisible."



Skiddy Money

By J. Frank Davis

Author of "The Place of the Gods," "Real Ranger Stuff," Etc.

In the interest of honesty Kittie didn't mind taking the law into her own hands.

MILAM OXNER, Texan, who had thick, dark hair, expressive eyes, an easy laugh, a decent upbringing, high-school diploma and a reckless disposition, deliberately became a professional lawbreaker at the age of twenty-five because of a damp speculation which, when it was made, was as legitimate as snipping a Liberty Bond coupon.

Forty-eight hours before he entered upon his hectic career of misconduct he hadn't any more intention of doing it than he had of trying to sell the Alamo to some ingenuous tourist from Oklahoma. He had lost his repair job at the Quality Garage, his savings had shrunk to a paltry twenty dollars and he needed money. And out in a thousand-acre pasture, a dozen miles from town, he happened to be possessed of something that could be turned into cash—something that he owned as justly and lawfully as he owned the stylish soft collar that encircled his neck.

Buying it had been lawful. Keeping it was lawful. Selling it chanced to be otherwise, yet it did not seem to him very sinful. When he left the bank where he had just drawn out his last dollar and hunted up a rather unornamental acquaintance who was posted on many things he had no slightest notion of doing anything more than realizing on an old investment.

Following a brief period of disarming conversation he asked casually:

"Suppose some fellow had a supply of hooch on hand and wanted to get rid of it but didn't want to go into the bootlegging business himself, who would he sell it to? Who takes it at wholesale?"

"Who doesn't that's got the price?" his sophisticated friend replied. "What kind of hooch? Moonshine or tequila?"

"Oh, I don't know. Either. Or old stuff that was made before the big drought."

"Good liquor, for the swell trade that's willing to pay, would go to 'Silent Bill' Gusky, I reckon. What do you want to know for?"

"Just curiosity," Mile said. "You haven't heard of anybody that wants to hire a good jitney nurse, have you? I'm still looking for a job."

Silent Bill Gusky, a middle-aged man whose face muscles had hardened in five thousand poker games, a reasonable percentage of them honest, went willingly to inspect the cave in the pasture where Mile had hidden ten gallons of whisky, bought purely as a speculation around bluebonnet time in 1918, when the possession of alcohol, however immoral it may have been, still lacked a month or so of being criminal. He had made the investment on the advice of a friendly and far-seeing old cattleman who regularly had his flivver tinkered at the Quality Garage and liked him.

As Mile was and always had been a total abstainer and as nobody but he knew of

the existence of the little cave nothing had happened to the liquor except that it had grown four years older—and there are things which age cannot wither nor storage stale.

Gusky inspected the labels, tasted a swallow here and a sip there, grunted scornfully to conceal enthusiasm and offered Mile six dollars a quart for the lot as it stood.

Mile asked for fifteen, they dickered, and Silent Bill gave him an even five hundred dollars for the ten gallons, thereby reducing his own profit to not much more than ten dollars a quart.

Five hundred dollars, on an investment of seventy, and not a job in sight in the motor-repairing line! For twenty-four hours young Oxner wrestled with temptation; then he visited Bill Gusky again.

"I'm not aiming to beat about the bush," he said. "Do you ever back rum runners from the border, Mr. Gusky?"

"No," said Bill.

"I was thinking I might buy me a secondhand lizzie and tackle a few trips. But when I get the car bought I won't have enough cash to swing the deal for the stuff. And I don't know where to get it, or how to get in touch with those fellows down there on the river, or where to get rid of it in a lump, here."

"I don't handle tequila," said Gusky.

"So I've heard. Who does?"

"I don't know."

As Silent Bill, who was playing solitaire, was frowningly resisting an impulse to cheat himself and seemed to have forgotten he was not alone, Mile shifted from one foot to the other, then turned toward the door. "Thanky kindly, suh," he said. "I thought maybe you might wise me."

Bill turned another card, discovered that honesty had demonstrated itself to be the best policy and that perhaps the game would come out all right anyhow, and looked up.

"Come back to-morrow night about this time," he said. "I'll ask some questions."

Silent Bill made a number of inquiries the following day, all of them having to do not with the activities of rum runners and their backers, but with the reputation of Milam Oxner as to honesty, nerve and ability to keep his business to himself. When Mile came back he suggested without preliminaries:

"Why don't you go see 'Frosty' Boyer?"

"You mean John T.? The president of the Two Nations Bank?"

"Yes."

"But does he—is he interested in border rum running?"

"I don't know," said Silent Bill. "See him."

The Two Nations Bank was a small, inconspicuous institution that squeezed its one-story shabbiness between a restaurant and a clothing store on the border of the Mexican business quarter. It was a private affair, of the type known in Texas as a "three-ball bank," whose dealings were principally the making of loans and whose customers were largely of Mexican blood.

In it Mr. John T. Boyer sat in his cubby-hole of an office the following forenoon and received Mile with neither welcoming acclaim nor more than normal suspicion, Silent Bill having conferred with him briefly over this matter the day before and he having already looked Mile up.

With an embarrassment not lessened by Boyer's manner, which had justly earned him his soubriquet, Mile stated his wishes.

"What capital have you got?" the banker asked.

"Enough to buy a car and live on until I've made a trip."

"Two hundred quarts of tequila, delivered on this side of the river, costs four hundred dollars. How much of that will you put up?"

"None," Mile said unhesitatingly.

As Frosty had asked this question purely as a matter of form he wasted no further time on it.

"The profits of one load—two hundred quarts—come to six hundred dollars at the present market. You get two."

"What do you mean, six hundred?" Mile demanded. "Isn't the market price seven or eight dollars here in San Antonio?"

"At retail, yes. You weren't figuring on peddling it, were you? In lump we'll sell it at five a quart; the bootlegger has to make two or three. Well, it costs a dollar on the Mexican side and a dollar to get it smuggled across. Three a quart profit on the load; six hundred dollars. And, as I said, you get two hundred."

"I get four," Mile contradicted him.

"I'm putting up all the money," Frosty reminded him.

"And I'm putting up a perfectly good Ford car and me."

"I back you," argued Frosty. "I lose the load if you get pinched. I get you bail at all hours of the day and night. I furnish a good lawyer. I do everything but serve your time."

"I have to get half," Mile insisted.

This being the customary arrangement Frosty agreed to it after no more than fifteen minutes' debate.

"Did you ever happen to meet 'Trinidad' Stone?" the banker asked after this detail was out of the way.

"Never heard of him."

"He's an American—born in Texas, but half Mex. Used to be in the saloon business in Mercado. Had a little difficulty with the government over the draft and slipped across to Lianza. He hasn't been this side of the Rio Grande since. You buy of him."

"But if he never comes this side—look here, Mr. Boyer! I'm not going to run any stuff across. Not a chance!"

"There's a place in Mercado—I'll give you the address before you start—where you drop in, when you are ready, and remark that you are thinking of heading for home in a couple of hours. When that two hours is up you leave the city and turn down the river. There's a big pasture about sixteen miles down where you wait. The stuff comes across. You pay for it—two dollars a quart. You leave about dark. You have to get here before daylight. I tell you an address over on the West Side to deliver it to; a man there pays you your fifty per cent, cash on delivery. If you're a good driver and attend to business, catching up on sleep and all that, you ought to be able to make three trips a fortnight. It's the easiest money ever you saw."

"This Stone? Is he a fellow that's always on the level?"

"Nobody in the rum-running business is. He's as near square as any of them. Going to tackle it?"

Breathless adventure loomed pleasantly ahead.

"I'll try anything once," said Mile.

II.

Exciting as it all was nothing happened during Oxner's first trip to emphasize its hazards. He went to Mercado, a good-sized city in Huevaca County, faced across the coffee-colored Rio Grande by the sleepy

Mexican village of Lianza. He found the address that Frosty Boyer had given him to be a respectable-appearing soft-drink stand. When, with tires inspected and gas and oil replenished, he dropped in to buy a bottle of ginger ale and remark that he reckoned he would be heading toward San Antonio the smiling young Mexican to whom he gave his message went into a back room and telephoned across the river.

Mile heard the message and he understood Spanish passably. It was to the effect that a cousin of the speaker's who had been expected to arrive that afternoon had been delayed on the road by tire trouble and would get in, bar accident, in about three hours. The figure two hundred was also mentioned.

When the three hours had passed, Mile, his car concealed in a clump of trees that could not be seen from the distant road, watched a rowboat set out from the Mexican shore of the Rio Grande. There were three men in it and two of them held rifles. When the boat touched United States soil one of the men went downstream and the other one up. Nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed. Then the man in the boat waved his hand and a flatboat came slowly across. On it were two hundred quarts of tequila worth a dollar each when they left Mexico and twice that five minutes later.

The Mexican in charge was young and tall and dark and scarred across the jaw. His name, he said, was José. What other name he might own he forbore to mention.

Mile checked up the tequila and paid over his four hundred dollars. Before he had finished loading he saw the flatboat return, the armed guards come back from up and down the river and join the man who still waited beside the rowboat, and the rowboat depart. The entire proceeding had moved with an absence of excitement and confusion that demonstrated how routineline it had become.

Oxner stepped on his gas and headed for San Antonio. The trip was wholly without incident. Sunrise found him with a car in which not a quart of contraband remained, heading away from the little adobe house where a Mexican had received his load and handed him three hundred dollars in good United States currency.

A hundred dollars a day, for three-days' work!

"Some easy, this!" he jubilated. "Four

or five hundred a week as long as things go good—and they'd have to go pretty rotten to cost a whole week's income. Why have I been hammering tinware all this time? Easy money!"

He rolled into bed before eight, slept all day and saw Frosty Boyer by telephone appointment in the evening. Boyer gave him another four hundred for a load and he set forth for Mercado in the morning.

It was at Mercado, while he was on his third trip, that he met Kittie Russell.

The manner of their meeting had no striking features. Mile had run into an acquaintance on the street and they stood in a drug store having an ice cream soda when she came up to the counter, where Mile's acquaintance introduced them. She had brown hair that was bobbed a little more attractively than any bobbed hair he had ever noticed, and irregular piquant features, and a complexion that was not any more touched up than complexions almost have to be in the subtropics, and about the jolliest little laugh he had ever heard. Her clothes helped, too. She was a stenographer and she had just finished work for the day.

He called that night and she strolled downtown with him to a picture show. He told her that his business—which was trading—brought him to Mercado pretty often and that he wanted to come and see her the following week. Something has already been said, near the beginning of this narrative, about Mile's eyes and his thick, dark hair and his easy, laugh. She didn't find it any effort at all to tell him he would be welcome.

Down in the pasture by the river, sixteen miles from town, the next afternoon, José, the visible chief of the liquor smugglers, said in his own language to Mile as he counted his four hundred dollars:

"You are tied up with that Señor Boyer, no? A big split you have to give him, I bet you. If you wanted to do business direct—well, one man's money is as good as another's with us."

"Thanks, José. But I didn't have the dinero to start with."

"You have it now, no? Of course if we deal with one who takes only small lots it is no more than right that you pay a little more. But not much. Each trip you slip me, say, twenty-five dollars. Then I fix it so you get the goods just the same as though you were working with Boyer."

"That's worth thinking over," Mile said. "Sure," replied José. "Twenty-five isn't much—and think of the bigger profit on the other end."

Mile did think it over much of the way to San Antonio. He was still thinking it over when he made delivery of his two hundred bottles to the Mexican at the little adobe house on the West Side, and, surprisingly, the Mexican stepped into his thoughts.

This agent of Boyer's was an oldish man, with wrinkled brown skin and little piglike eyes. He had counted out Mile's three hundred and was handing it to him when he said:

"I bet you you weesh you don't have to pay that Frosty Boyer so much. He's a robber, that Frosty."

"But you—"

The old Mexican did not let him finish. "I work for heem, yes," he said. "And sometimes I work for me, too. Why not? Now eef you was to bring thiz supply to me, myself, and see it for a little small discount—for about four seventy-five a bottle instead of five dollars—well, what thiz Frosty Boyer don't know, it don't worry heem to death, does it?"

"That's worth thinking over," Mile said.

Every single one of them out to double cross every other one of them! Just as he had always heard.

Nine hundred dollars he had made now and but for Boyer it might as well have been sixteen hundred or better. Sooner or later, as an incident of the business, he must expect to lose a car, or a load, or a heavy shakedown to high jackers or grafting officials, but with a bankroll he could stand it. Why should Frosty get half his profits now that he had capital?

He walked in on the banker that afternoon and asked:

"How much notice would you give me if you decided you didn't want to do any more business with me, Mr. Boyer?"

"About as long as it would take you to turn your head and spit. And you're entitled to give me the same. Go to it! Most of 'em do. And most of 'em come back—if they ain't in jail."

"I didn't necessarily mean—"

"Yes, you did. You've run three trips without trouble and got the swelled head that I expected you would. You've arranged with Stone or somebody else down

there at the river to buy your own and you've found a market for it here. All right. We're through. When you get into a mess don't send for me to get you out. Good evening."

"Gee, that was easy!" breathed Mile as he came out on to the street. "As easy as the money. Five-twenty-five a trip from now out! This is the life, I'll tell the cockeyed world!"

III.

A prospective interruption to the excitement of his occupation, an excitement pleasurable enhanced by the satisfaction of not yet having been held up by either law officers or high jackers, developed after ten days when he was in Mercado on his third independent trip.

An election campaign for county officers had begun and one Jim Linford, a reform candidate for sheriff against the long-time incumbent, had announced his intention, if elected, of making Huevaca County dangerous for liquor smugglers and their transportation associates. He and his friends freely charged, in their speeches, that Jacinto Burns, the old sheriff, had been protecting the illicit traffic, and although Burns and all his supporters ridiculed the charge and defied any one to prove that the sheriff had not done everything that was humanly possible to stamp out rum running in the county they passed the word along in the proper quarters that it would be well for antiprohibition activities to cease until after election, which was nearly a month away.

The smiling youth in the soft-drink establishment where Mile left his messages for Trinidad Stone slipped him the word that after to-morrow's load there would be a hiatus in international trade until Jacinto Burns was safely enthroned as law-enforcement chief for another term.

A sharp thundershower, late that afternoon, smeared the streets and roads with a treacherous layer of greasy adobe mud, and the inevitable happened when Mile, driving in the early evening with Kittie Russell beside him and paying attention to the road and to her in the ratio of one to three, beheld, issuing from a street on his left, an automobile moving even faster than he was, driven by a charming young woman of not more than seventeen years, and realized that road rules—such as the one that the driver

on the right at an intersection has right of way—meant little or nothing in her spoiled young life.

"Loose car!" he ejaculated as he realized that she was one who expected the rest of the wide world to avoid collisions, and jammed on his emergency.

There was no crash. The young lady impervious to rules sailed safely past his radiator with inches to spare and not even a startled look, and his car aimlessly performed one of the most complicated feats of fancy skidding that he had ever participated in.

The minor gods who watch over the destinies of helpless motorists brought them out of its intricacies unharmed. The car came to a stop, facing in the opposite direction from which it had been heading, a rear wheel on the uncurbed sidewalk four inches from a tree, with nothing out of the normal except the tempo of its occupants' heartbeats.

Mile worked his starter, turned the car about, and resumed the drive.

"She might have smiled at us as she went by," he said.

"Oh!" cried Kittie, acquiring breath and speech simultaneously. "I never was so scared in my life. She ought to be arrested. Drive carefully."

"I was—which proves you have to drive all the cars on the road as well as your own," he said. "Well, that's that. But I'm here to declare that of all the helpless feelings in the world a bad skid makes the worst. You don't know whether you're bound home or to the cemetery but you've started."

"I wish we had her number."

"What for? Arrest a pretty lady who is in a hurry? It ain't done. She wanted to get somewhere."

"She's there by now," Kittie said grimly. "I'd like to slap her face."

Perhaps it was the sense of uncommon nearness to one another that this shared danger developed, perhaps the fact that for several weeks he would have no business excuse for coming to Mercado, or perhaps it was only that the moon rose just as they stopped on the summit of a hill overlooking the river, but for some reason Mile won courage to put a question that had formed itself in his mind during many long, hazardous, hard-driving hours, and her answer would have been altogether satisfactory if she hadn't qualified it.

"I do," she said. "You know I do, Mile. But—wait a minute! Won't you let me get my breath long enough to talk a minute?"

He did presently and she pushed him away from her a considerable distance.

"Your business, Mile," she murmured.

"It worries me frightfully."

"My business, honey!"

"You haven't told me; but you didn't lie, either, when you said you were trading. I'm awfully glad you didn't lie to me, Mile. But I suspected what kind of trading—and one day I saw you talking to that slick-haired Mexican that grins like a Cheshire cat, in that soft-drink place, and everybody knows what sort of headquarters that is, Mile! I wish you wouldn't! I lie awake nights, now, worrying. I couldn't marry you if you kept on."

"Oh, but listen, dear!" he cried. "There isn't anything so terribly bad to it."

"It's breaking the law," she told him.

"Well, what of that? There's laws and laws. There's a law against pistol toting. How many men do you know that don't pack a pistol at least once in a while? I'll bet your father does. There's a law against smuggling. Do you know anybody that thinks it's a sin to slip things in from across the river without paying duty, if they can get away with it? There's a law says autos shan't be run in the city limits faster than fifteen miles an hour. Do you know anybody that obeys it—or that thinks any worse of other folks that don't unless they happen to kill somebody? I'm breaking the law exactly as much as that flapper that pretty nearly ruined us an hour ago—and not doing as much harm as she took a chance of doing, either."

Kittie could read her own stenographic pot hooks when they were more than three hours cold, could hammer out nearly seventy words a minute on her typewriter, get two *l's* into "all right," make over a dress acceptably and cook palatable peach short-cake, but she had no genius for polemics.

"That sounds like a good argument," she said, "and I don't know why it isn't—but it isn't. And if it was I'd still remember that if you get caught you'll go to jail and I wouldn't marry a man that had been in jail—never!"

"I haven't enough money to get married on," he confessed. "After this trip I'll have a little over two thousand dollars. That isn't enough."

"Of course it is. You've told me that one of these days you are thinking of getting a little repair garage—"

"Who said a little one? We'll have a good repair joint, and some livery cars, and a gas—"

"That shop on Yturri Street is for sale. I asked about it the other day. It can be got for fifteen hundred dollars cash. You said yourself, when we drove by, that that ought to be a nice little stand."

"Sure; a nice *little* stand. Nix! No dinky place like that for Mile and Kittie! Just a few more trips, honey, and I'll quit the game and settle down. All I'm going to wait for is five thousand dollars and that won't take long. I tell you, of all the easy money—"

"Easy come is easy go!" Kittie cried. "You are risking for it but you aren't working for it—not work in proportion to what you get. You can't keep it. First thing you know—it will be like when you tried to stop quick, back there, and didn't know where you were going but were on your way. Skiddy money. That's what it is, Mile. Skiddy money."

"Listen, sweetheart! There isn't going to be anything doing in my line until after election. I'm going to make a trip to-morrow night and then I'm coming back down here and take a vacation where I'll see you every night—and some days."

"I wish, after that—I wish you'd leave well enough alone."

"I will," he promised her, "as soon as it is well enough, but it isn't yet. It won't take three months to make the rest of five thousand. Then it's us for the garage and livery, either here in town or in San Antonio, if you'd rather. I don't want to start business with a piker's stake; it isn't square to you. With five thousand—"

She surrendered but her eyes were anxious.

"Oh, Mile!" she urged. "Don't take reckless chances. Be careful. I'd rather see the money skid, every cent of it, than have you get into trouble."

"Don't worry," he assured her gayly. "We're protected in this county and there ain't enough of those Federal guys to catch one load out of a hundred. You'll never hear of me being on the inside, looking out. Gee, we're talking about unimportant dope! Tell me, sweetheart. When was the first time you knew you cared?"

IV.

Mercado and the balance of Huevaca County, on election day, startlingly got itself onto the front page of every daily newspaper in the State.

With sunny skies and nine tenths of the women for once united the electorate upset every calculation of the professional politicians, pushed old Jacinto Burns ungently away from the public trough in which his feet had rested for a dozen years and set him to cursing the nineteenth amendment much harder than ever he had cursed the eighteenth.

These maledictions, although delivered with a swing and style and sureness that won him ungrudging admiration did not in any wise delay the swearing in of his successor. For two years at least, unless his health should fail or some ambitious gun-fighter beat him to the draw, the reformer Jim Linford was to represent the majesty of Texas law along the northern shores of that reach of the Rio Grande.

On the day after election the sleek-haired youth in the soft-drink stand, his grin relatively wan, whispered to Milam Oxner that Trinidad Stone desired speech with him at his place of business in Lianza. Leaving his automobile and most of his money where the Stars and Stripes could protect them Mile crossed the river.

Stone, a shifty-eyed person in his middle thirties, with American features and Indian coloring, was slightly in his cups, and morose.

"The United States is a hell of a country and Texas is getting just as bad," he declared somberly. "It wasn't enough to go butting into that war and making trouble for a lot of good people over that cussed draft, but then they had to go and shut off personal liberty—and now Huevaca County elects a long-nosed Puritan whelp like this Jim Linford. Me, I ain't even going to stay where I can look across into the damn country. I'm going to beat it down to Tampico. Come in here."

He led Mile to a storeroom and gestured toward a supply of American pre-Volstead drinkables.

"I had all this in my place in Mercado; shipped it across here before prohibition," he said. "This and a lot more. I've been selling right along, here, by the drink, but I've got this much left and a big jag of it hid out in the country, too. Whisky,

brandy, gin, vermouth, all the cocktail makin's, even a little champagne. Here's a list, all made out in typewriter. I haven't been sending any of it into the States; been selling tequila and waiting for the prices on this good old stuff to get higher—and now I'm through. I'm going to shoot the wad. At wholesale."

"Why?" Mile asked.

"Didn't I tell you I'm through with the States? They're no place for a free Christian to live in, or even look at. And this cussed Jim Linford—he's got it in for me, anyway. He was one of them narrow-minded slob on that draft board that made all the trouble for me when I was living over there, tending to my own business and believing in live and let live. There ain't going to be any chance for me to do a decent, honest business across the river after he gets organized. But before he gets fairly settled in his new job—I'll sell you the whole lot, one delivery at the usual place, for seventy-five hundred dollars. It's worth close to thirty-five thousand in San 'Ntonio."

Before Mile's ambitious eyes spread a vision of his repair garage and livery expanded beyond any previous dream and all accomplished in one swift transaction.

"It sounds worth thinking over," he said. "How could we run a big shipment like this?"

Stone had a matured plan and outlined it. Mile did not intimate that the cash it called for put it beyond his financial powers, but took the first train for San Antonio and called on Frosty Boyer.

"You said they all come back, boss," he told Frosty cheerfully. "Here I am. I've got a chance to make us a nice piece of money."

"What put the fear o' God into *your* heart?" Boyer growled. "Pinch, seizure or high jacks?"

"Neither. I've got a deal to swing that's too big for me." The banker, as Mile went into it at length, unsuccessfully endeavored to hide his satisfaction.

"You furnish the truck, of course," he said after a while.

"You furnish the truck," Mile corrected. "She'll cost about three thousand dollars—and a couple of hundred more for the barrels and painting. I haven't got that much and if I had I wouldn't spend it with you getting a full half of the profits."

"Seven hundred, the truck will cost, or maybe eight," Boyer amended. "That's the first payment on the installment plan; if it gets seized I let the automobile company hold the bag. All right; I'll put up the money. I wouldn't if I didn't like you, Oxner."

A little presentiment ran through Mile's brain. Since when had Frosty Boyer liked anybody?

"Stone will have to take his money in a check," said Boyer. "I wouldn't trust him with the cash; it isn't going to be possible to tally up the contents of as big a load as that as delivered, and he's a crook. I wouldn't put it past him to double cross us."

"He'd never take a check. You know it."

"He wouldn't if you proposed it in advance, perhaps, but if you wait until the stuff is all smuggled across and then offer it—a cashier's check, of course, made to Stone's order by this bank. You may have to talk eloquent but he'll take it. You tell him, of course, that I wasn't willing to trust you with the cash for fear of holdups."

"He'll be sore," Mile objected.

"Not as sore as I'd be, after we got the stuff here, if I found out it didn't come up to specifications. And, see here! That cashier's check has got to be fixed so it isn't cashable until we've checked up whether the shipment is all right or not."

"How?"

"I'll think that out. You go arrange for the barrels."

Across South Texas, week in and week out, rolls a flock of trucks of a big oil company, identifiable as far as they can be seen by the peculiar and striking shade of red that they and all the company's barrels are painted. The barrels that Mile bought were of the size and shape used by this corporation. He got them across the river into Lianza, where a trustworthy painter went to work to duplicate the company's tint. Another painter, in Mercado, decorated the truck that Boyer, through some dummy, bought for a thousand dollars down. When it was finished, it matched the company's vehicles, to the casual eye, even to the lettering of the corporation's name.

These things accomplished Mile returned to San Antonio for his final conference with Boyer.

The banker laid before him a cashier's check for seven thousand five hundred dollars.

"This check," he said, "is worth seventy-five hundred dollars—if the shipment is what Stone says it is. If he slips over any bottles of tequila, moonshine, synthetic hooch or water on us it isn't worth seventy-five cents."

He amplified this.

"It looks like a good check, doesn't it? Every name on it right and the signatures just like every regular cashier's check that goes out of this bank. Well, there isn't one of those signatures straight. Every one of them is a forgery."

"Nothing doing!" declared Mile. "I'm not going to—"

"Wait a minute. You're thinking with your mouth, like one of these here bolsheviks. Wait till I tell you. What you want to do is be on the square with Stone if he's on the square with us, isn't it?"

Mile agreed this expressed his sentiments.

"All right. You get the booze and give him this check. He sends it across to a Mercado bank. By the time they get it up here we've had a chance to check up the shipment. If the stuff is as represented my bank pays the check without a word—and nobody in the world but you and I and the fellow that wrote those names knows there ever was a phony check. But if we find Stone has double crossed us—" Frosty spread his hands and allowed himself a cold smile. "Then we'll negotiate with him as to what is a fair pro-rated price for the stuff that is what he said it would be. Any handwriting expert in the world will back me in not paying the check."

"But Stone will figure that I did it."

"Then he'll respect you for being cagy enough not to let him slip one over on you. He isn't coming over into the United States to do anything about it, is he? Especially as he tried to crook you."

"But who will be supposed to have done the forging? And the check is one of your regular ones."

Boyer almost grinned.

"One of my men here in the bank died about a month ago," he said. "He didn't leave any kin to make a fuss if it should come out that maybe he swiped a blank cashier's check or two. As to who forged it, you don't know, and I've forgotten—and there never would be any investigation, anyway. The man that gets trimmed in a bootleg deal doesn't go to the police. And

you don't want to forget that if the stuff he delivers is all right the check is good."

"I'll be no party to trimming Stone if he does his share as he promises to. This has got to be understood. If he plays square with us, your bank cashes it—and if he doesn't we pay him for the part of the lot that is all right."

"Absolutely," Boyer promised.

Kittie Russell, on the evening before the big deal was to be put across, reverted to the subject of the little garage on Yturri Street.

"I asked again to-day," she said, "and it hasn't been sold. Fifteen hundred cash. I wish you'd buy it and settle down, Mile. There isn't any need to take more risks to get more money. I can keep on with my job and we'll have enough."

"A week from now," he said, "we'll have enough so you won't ever have to jump another fool brown fox over a lazy dog to come to the aid of the party. Don't ask me any questions, but I'm going to put through just one more trip—and it's going to be a killing. See that?" Boyishly he dragged out of his pocket a roll of bills. "There's twenty-one hundred dollars. It's going to be better than fifteen thousand in less than a week."

"Why, Mile!" she breathed, excited and apprehensive. "What are you carrying all that money with you for? It's dangerous."

"With things running as they are with me right at this minute a fellow needs all his cash in his pocket, for emergencies. There's no telling when he will have to be little Mister Fix-it with some bunch of officers. Don't worry. There won't any high jackers get it." And still boyishly he gave her a glimpse of an automatic pistol in his pocket.

"Oh, dear! I wish you wouldn't!" she cried and he swept her into his arms and kissed her.

"I won't—but once more," he said. "I'll be back in less than a week to tell your boss he can have the second prettiest girl in Mercado for his stenographer if he can get her, but not the prettiest, not never any more, because Mrs. Milam G. Oxner is off batting typewriter keys for keeps."

"I wish you would leave that two thousand dollars with me. I wish you would buy that little garage," Kittie pleaded.

"After to-morrow," he replied, "there isn't anything your little heart desires that I don't aim to see you get."

5A—P

Late the following afternoon he stood beside his truck, concealed in the trees in the down-the-river pasture. He was dressed in overalls, as became a chauffeur of an oil company's vehicles, and there were artistic smears of oil on his hands and face.

The rowboat arrived with its guards who deployed upstream and down. The signal was given and the flatboat came across. On it were three red barrels, each presumably packed full of bottles of preprohibition American liquor. José and another Mexican helped Mile load them on the truck. Then José, smiling amiably, remarked to Mile:

"Señor Stone says—this trade being so large—that we shall collect the price of each load as it comes across. That is fair, no?"

"It's fair enough but I can't do it," Mile told him. "You see the payment is all in one check."

José's smile wiped itself out.

"A check?" he repeated.

"It's a cashier's check on the Two Nations Bank."

"I have no orders about that. You had better come across and see Señor Stone; he is there, just on the other side."

"No," said Mile.

"Why? What is the matter with the check?" José shrewdly inquired.

"Oh, I'll come," Mile told him.

He walked around the truck and slipped his roll of money out of his pocket and into a hiding place in the tool box; he would risk his own hide in Mexico but not his capital. On second thought he also decided to leave his pistol; it would be useless against at least five antagonists and if his wits would not bring him safe home again it was doubtful if an automatic would.

He crossed the river with José and found Trinidad Stone worse for liquor than he had ever before seen him. They met in a hut a little way back from the river. Many red barrels in its vicinity were guarded by no less than six armed men.

Stone glowered with saturnine suspicion when Mile explained the payment situation.

"I don't take checks," he growled.

"But it isn't a personal check; it's a cashier's. They're just as good as money, aren't they?"

"Nothing's as good as money. How much cash have you got on you?"

"Not twenty dollars."

Stone's hand slipped to the butt of a pistol swinging at his thigh.

"Keep your hands out at your sides," he commanded. "I want to know how bad you're lying to me. Look him over and see, José."

José obeyed. Mile neither resisted nor protested the search.

Stone scowled at him.

"No money to speak of; no gun," he said. "You might be telling the truth about the check; we'll find out before we go any further. Frosty Boyer is a crook. I wouldn't put it past him to double cross me. You'll stay here until it goes through the bank."

"That will take some time. I'll go to Mercado and come back to-morrow," Mile suggested.

"I said you'll stay here," Stone told him harshly. To the Mexicans who surrounded them he spoke in Spanish. "If he tries to make a get-away, shoot him." He walked toward a little automobile and turned to remark, very unpleasantly: "When I get the money you'll get delivery. If this check ain't good you'd better be saying some prayers while I'm gone, because you won't get time for many after I get back."

Mile sat down on the floor of the shack with his back against the wall and tried to keep on smiling. He knew what chance Stone had to cash that check, with him and his load unreported to Boyer. He wasn't sure they would thereafter kill him although it wasn't outside the possibilities. But at best he would have to ransom himself and as they would send for the money he could not hope that anything would be coming back to him out of his twenty-one hundred dollars.

Night fell and the Mexicans guarded him in relays of two, while the remainder slept. Somebody discovered that the top of a barrel was loose and a bottle was taken out and passed around. A second bottle and a third were opened. A fourth. With dawn almost at hand the thing that he had been hoping for came to pass; the two men on guard slept as soundly as the rest.

With infinite caution, holding his breath, he worked his way to the door, then slipped down to the river. His overalls, shoes and stockings tied in a bundle on his head, he swam across. The sun rose as he finished dressing beside the truck. He slipped his

automatic into his pocket with a hand that shook from cold, and his fingers closed on his roll of money. And at that moment a voice spoke from close behind him, with imperative sharpness:

"Get 'em up! Pronto! Don't try to go after the gun!"

He obeyed and turned. A good-looking young man who had stepped out from behind a tree threatened him with a steady Colt pistol. In the early sunlight he saw the fellow's face clearly and recognized him as Hampton Bird, one of Sheriff Linford's new deputies.

"Keep 'em up!" Bird commanded and came to search him. "All right," he said, when he had found the automatic and relieved him of it. "All right; you can put 'em down. Well, what have you got to say?"

"It isn't my say," Mile replied, striving for philosophical calm. "Where do we go from here?"

The young deputy sheriff nodded judicially.

"Nothing to say is right," he agreed. "Possession of liquor. Participation in smuggling. Carrying a pistol without a permit. Some little list of charges to go against you, hombre. Some sweet little mess of time you're due to spend in our State and national institutions."

Mile tried to look unconcerned but it was difficult. "I'll never marry a man that has been in jail—never!" Kittie had said it and he believed she meant it. And the best lawyer in the world couldn't get him clear, caught with the goods this way.

"Can't—can't this be fixed up?" he asked.

The deputy sheriff surveyed him stonily. "How?"

"I've got some money—quite some. I'll pay a thousand dollars."

"It will take more than that."

Mile sighed. Here went the whole roll, but there was no use in trying to deceive; the officer could count it.

"I've got twenty-one hundred and some odd," he said. "Leave me the some odd to get home with."

"And you're not to run another load of booze in this county," Hampton Bird stipulated.

"Nor in any other county," amended Mile whole-heartedly. "After this—good night! I'm going to work."

"Give me the twenty-one hundred, help me unload these barrels and beat it with the truck," said the deputy. "I'll find the barrels here and seize them after you've gone. And you're a lucky pup, at that."

"You've got twisted ideas of luck," grumbled Mile and handed him the roll.

V.

Over the telephone, Kittie Russell squealed delightedly.

"The whole twenty-one hundred?" she cried. "Isn't that lovely!"

"Well maybe it is, but that won't be the word if Jim Linford ever finds out about it," a pleasant masculine voice replied. "But I've got it honestly enough; it wasn't a holdup; he offered it to me of his own free will. It's all in bills. I don't believe I'd better come near your house or office. Tell me where to meet you. Dog-gone it, I wished half a dozen times I hadn't promised you—but I had to tell you yesterday evening what that painter tipped me was coming off; you'd have felt too badly if I hadn't and nature had taken its course."

"Of course I would. He'd have been arrested."

"That would have had to come some time—unless that man Boyer trimmed him to a hard-oil finish first. Boyer always double crosses his runners sooner or later. He gets the profits and they get the pen. But when I came to you I only intended for you to warn him off; I didn't expect you'd insist on my trying to put over any such scheme

as I did. Well, it has worked out all right—if nobody ever tells old Jim—but there ain't another man, woman or child in Texas I'd do it for but you."

"Warnings wouldn't do any good," she said. "Once they get to going they don't stop trying to make easy money until it stops being easy. And I just love you for it, Hampiel. You're the best cousin I've got in the world. I'm just as happy as I can be."

Not happy was Mile Oxner. He tossed for hours upon his hot bed in the hotel before he fitfully slept. Toward night he rose, dressed, ate, and let dragging feet bear him to Kittie's house. There, gloomily, he broke it to her that it would be many a long month before they could marry.

"I've got to get me a job," he said. "Never mind how it happened; I've lost even that two thousand. I'm a darned fool, Kittie. I haven't got a lick of sense. If I'd only listened to you—gee, I wish I'd bought that little garage! Fifteen hundred dollars looked piking—and now it would loom up like the head elephant in a circus parade."

"Mile!" whispered Kittie, snuggling. "Dearest! There's something I've never told you. I oughtn't to have secrets from you or deceive you and I never will, after this. I've got a little money. It's right where I can get it to-morrow. We'll take it and buy that garage. And there'll be some left over. It happens to be just twenty-one hundred dollars."

Another story by Mr. Davis, "According to His Folly," in the next POPULAR.



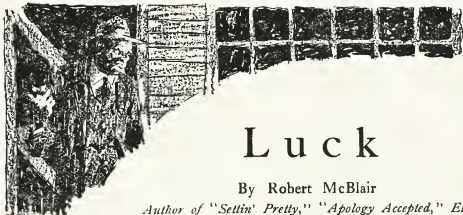
THE SCARS OF SLUMBER

CLAUDE A. SWANSON of Virginia, is one of the unbeatable members of the United States Senate. He has spent practically his entire life in public office, and last summer, when he was opposed for the renomination to the Senate by Westmoreland Davis, a former governor of the State, Swanson won hands down without having made a campaign speech or taken a political trip. But in his earlier years, when he was a member of the House, he sometimes had to put up a battle for the honor.

During one such struggle he had to spend the night in a small-town hotel that was crowded to the attic. Having come in late, he was given a hall room and felt lucky to get that. When he was ready for sleep, however, he found that he had a makeshift bed; it lacked a mattress, and, being provided with wire network springs, two sheets and a blanket, it gave small promise of comfortable rest. But Swanson was too tired to look for a mattress. He rolled in and slept.

"Well," asked the landlord in the morning, "how did you sleep, congressman?"

"Pretty well, thanks," replied Swanson genially; "but I looked like a waffle when I got up."



Luck

By Robert McBlair

Author of "Settin' Pretty," "Apology Accepted," Etc.

Fish Kelly knew his luck was going to change. It did!

FISH KELLY'S manner was grandiloquent, his appearance was superb. His tall thin frame was incased in a wasp-waisted black suit, the trousers of which were creased to an almost dangerous sharpness. His high celluloid collar, of a baby blue, infolded a necktie of a shrill soprano pink. The brim of his new felt hat, as black as his skin, was pulled down rakishly over one prominent eyeball. The other white eyeball watered in the acrid smoke of an enormous cigar decorated by an ornamental band. Fish was not used to smoking and occasionally he would remove the cigar and disapprovingly work his long black lips over his protruding white teeth. But, although the cigar hurt his eyes and made him feel a little sick, he nevertheless continued to let it hang over his receding chin. Restaurant proprietors, he had noticed, always smoke cigars.

He was absorbing the morning sunshine in front of his new restaurant. Behind him, through the clean glass windows, could be seen a delectable array of flaky-crusteds pies, cooked by his wife; the front of the restaurant was freshly painted white, and over his head was a brand-new red-lettered sign: Fish Kelly's Eat Place. With the assistance of his father-in-law he had just acquired this place and except for something less than a thousand dollars in the bank—half of which was his wife's—it represented the sum of his worldly goods. But with eight tables covered with red oilcloth the restaurant was easily the most pretentious in the colored section of this Virginia seaport town and to be its proprietor was no

mean distinction. It was too soon for prospective customers—colored laborers, bearing empty tin lunch pails—to be pouring homeward along the cobbled street. But on the opposite uneven brick sidewalk, in the shade of the weatherworn wooden dwellings, shuffled a considerable number of brethren and sistren. And Fish, negligently resting a wrist upon his hip, fancied that they nudged one another and looked across at him with admiring eyes.

"He sho' am some fancy dresser!"

It was the voice of the sporty new waitress, in the restaurant doorway. Fish grinned, and then pouted, trying not to lose his dignity, and looked toward her. But she was looking past him. He followed her gaze and was pained to see a high-yellow gentleman who made quite an impression upon the eye. In addition to a noisily checked maroon-colored suit, and a hat of a more beautiful green than grass, he twirled a yellow cane and—as a final cry of triumph—his glistening yellow shoes were incased in snow-white spats.

Fish moved his long lips over his prominent teeth and spat disgustedly upon the pavement. His grandiloquence had suffered a severe eclipse. He recognized in the rainbow-colored gentleman a man of whom Macedonia, his comely wife, was reputed to have been enamored before her marriage. In fact she had become so charmed by the yellow gentleman's radiance that she had intrusted to him the sum of her small savings. The idea had been that he would invest it for her in a business; but since the day she had given him the money, not he

nor the money nor the business had been seen.

"I knowed I was settin' too pretty!" Fish moaned to himself. He loved Macedonia too much to be indifferent to the reappearance of this young Apollo.

"What dat uppity nigger doin' here in town?" he inquired.

The waitress, hair oiled out straight, arms akimbo above the shortest of stylish short red skirts, was following the riot of color with admiring eyes.

"He don't do nothin' but talk," she answered, the purple powder on her brown face crumbling as she smiled. "He say, so long as de ladies likes good looks in a man talkin' is de mos' of his work."

Fish watched the twirling yellow cane and white spats until their owner turned the corner. "Um!" he grunted in deep disgust, with which perhaps was mingled a bit of fear.

The conversation was interrupted by the appearance of Macedonia, who came out of the door to their lodgings across the street, her arms full of paper napkins. She traversed the cobbles, pushed open the screen swinging door and hurried through the restaurant to the kitchen. In a moment she came out of the kitchen, her arms empty, and looked over the array of tables to see if everything was in order.

Fish's bosom swelled with tenderness as he watched her through the window. They had been lovers during their three years of marriage. Of a sudden he realized how lucky he had been—to have so sweet a wife, a little baby a year and a half old, and this new restaurant, which promised to be thriving and profitable. He roled his prominent eyes skyward.

"Lawd," he begged, "please don't let nothin' else happen—'cause I done had all de luck I kin hold an' anything new is jes' boun' to be trouble."

Macedonia took off her red hat and hung it on a hat tree midway the room, then gave a pat to her high coiled glossy black hair. Next she slipped off her tan coat and hung it beneath the hat. The sleeves of her blue-and-white-checked shirtwaist were rolled up over shapely light-brown arms. Her oval light-brown face, with its big alive dark eyes, was to Fish like a flower. She walked over to a glass kerosene lamp on one of the tables, then lifted her head.

"Fish!" she cried commandingly.

Fish stopped watching her through the glass and shuffled alertly inside.

"What you want, honey chile?"

"Don't you 'honey chile' me—standin' out dere projekin' wid dat flippity gal. Why you put dese lamps right under de curtains? You tryin' to set dis place on fire?"

"Reckon de waitress mus' 'a' done it, honey. I'll tell her how to put 'em."

"You tell her nothin'," retorted Macedonia. "I'll do de tellin'. You keep 'way from dat gal or fust thing you know you gwine see me projekin' my ownself."

Fish's heart came in his throat. "Honey, dis de fust words I have spoke to her sence she come. You know I ain't never look at nobody 'cept you."

Macedonia's eye was caught by something on the sidewalk. "Fix dem lamps," she commanded. "I'll be back directly." Without waiting for hat or coat she hurried toward the door. Fish glanced through the front window in time to see the flicker of a yellow cane against a moving maroon-colored suit. His receding chin dropped. He swallowed dryly.

"She can't be wantin' nothin' wid dat nigger," he assured himself. "Not after de way he done her."

But he was not so much assured that he did not walk to the door and look down the street. The debonair gentleman of the green hat and white spats was crossing to the opposite side of the street at the next corner. Macedonia was taking a hurried diagonal course across the cobbles, as if to cut him off. They reached the sidewalk at the same time and she spoke to him. He doffed his green hat with an elaborate bow. She laughed, fell into step at his side and they passed out of sight around the corner.

A hot tremor ran through Fish. His heart began to beat rapidly and to rise in his throat so that he could hardly breathe. Nothing like this had ever happened to him before. Since their marriage he had never had occasion to think that Macedonia could be attracted by another man. He was so stunned that at first he did not hear what the stylish waitress was saying.

"Dat nigger sho' am a doctor wid de wimmin!" she laughed. "No wonder he always got money."

"S'pose you go inside an' fix dem lamps so dey won't burn de place down when dey is lighted!" Fish's voice was unusually snappish, for his gentle nature. The waitress

whirled her short skirts and went inside with a taunting chuckle.

Fish's heart was going *trippety-trip* and his knees were trembling. He tried to convince himself that Macedonia couldn't possibly be interested in a man who had robbed her. And of course he would never think of following Macedonia to see what she was doing. But he felt the need of a little walk. So he shuffled down the street toward the corner around which she had disappeared.

When he reached the corner neither she nor the high-yellow gentleman was in sight. Feeling the need of more exercise Fish shuffled across the cobbles and down the sidewalk where they had gone. He had walked nearly a block without seeing them when his attention was attracted by a semicircle of colored youths standing round a blue automobile in a vacant lot. He joined them and found that the machine was being offered for sale by a stalwart black gentleman in a black-and-white-checked suit who was known as "Hot" Jackson, proprietor of the Elite Pool Room. Fish had seen the roadster before—flying with muffler cut out, tin hood gleaming, along Church Street, Hot Jackson at the wheel, some befurbelowed damsel beside him. It consisted of a homemade bright-blue body on a flivver chassis but the engine had been geared up to where it tore along at hair-raising speed. Fish for a moment forgot his misery as he stared at the shining roadster with yearning eyes. He had never even driven a machine and to own one he had always felt would be the height of unalloyed joy.

Hot Jackson must have seen the light in his eyes.

"Here a man what will buy dis car. A sportin' man. Fish Kelly, dat's him. He got a fine new rest'rant an' now he come along jes' when he kin git dis here speedster for five hundred dollar. An' dat's jest 'bout half what she worth. He sho' got nigger luck."

Fish was flattered at the attention. He grinned and pouted and covered and disclosed his white eyeballs. But he knew that Macedonia would never consent to spending half of their cash capital upon anything so luxurious. At the thought of Macedonia his dark mood returned.

"Jes' what a sportin' man like you needs," Hot Jackson continued, "for to take yo' little brown lady ridin'. If you can't find yo' own wife, take de other man's. If you

can't buy gas, borry de money from her." Hot Jackson brayed a loud laugh. "I can show you how! Learn you dat when I learns you to ride de machine."

The general cackle of laughter that followed this sally seemed to Fish, in his present mood, to have a special meaning. His tar-black face fell into sullen despondent lines. He pouted his long lips, blinked his black eyelids and shuffled out-of the crowd. Like a tall lanky black cloud, with long yellow feet, he shuffled morosely back to the restaurant, where he stood with hands in his pockets and awaited Macedonia's return.

She was a long time coming. Fish, although naturally self-distrustful and melancholy, had behind him three assuring years of happy married life. So by the time Macedonia reappeared he had almost convinced himself that it was silly of him to have this pain about his heart.

She came around the corner, walking with quick excited steps upon her high patent-leather heels, to Fish a rounded comely figure in her blue-and-white-checked shirt-waist and brown skirt. He watched her tenderly as she crossed the cobbled street and tapped along toward him over the uneven red brick pavement. When she reached him he would have slipped his arm about her. But she put him impatiently aside, an excited light in her big brown eyes.

"Fish," she said, "go down the bank an' bring me a hundred dollars. Right quick."

Fish's thin knees went suddenly weak. His prominent Adam's apple ran up and down inside his high blue collar as he swallowed desperately, thinking for words. He forced himself to say:

"What you want wid all dat money?"

Macedonia twisted her blue-and-white-checked shoulders impatiently. "Reckon half dat money in de bank is mine, ain't it? Is you goin' to git it, or no?"

This wasn't like Macedonia. She seemed suddenly strange—merely a comely young woman with a light-brown oval face and a trim figure. It wasn't like her not to know at once that he was sick at heart. That is what hurt the most, that she should be so otherwise interested as to be callous to him. His throat began to ache so that he couldn't swallow. He turned away and shambled blindly toward the bank, so that she would not see the tears that he was trying to blink down. A silver drop rolled the length of his

twitching black face but he wiped it away with a tar-black hand. First thing he knew folks would be noticin'. He sniffed, brushed his eyes with his knuckles and took a deep breath.

But it didn't help him to have to pass along the very block where Macedonia and the white-spatted gentleman had walked. When he went by the blue automobile in the vacant lot he had a sudden savage desire to buy it. Buy it and ride triumphantly back to the restaurant; ask the sporty waitress to accompany him—and show Macedonia that he could cut a wide swath without any need of her. But as he shuffled through the doors of the bank he decided that he would not buy it. Let Macedonia behave as she would; *he* would be faithful to *her*; he would live up to what was right and use his share of their money to carry on the restaurant and make a living for the family.

But after he had drawn the hundred dollars and started back—feeling steadier now that he had aligned himself on the side of virtue—he happened to glance across the street. There, lolling elegantly in the door of the Virginia Real Estate & Insurance Company, was the gentleman with the white spats. He was gazing across the street to where Hot Jackson was tuning up the engine of the blue speedster.

A hot rage swept over Fish. "I'll show 'em!" he said. He pivoted and returned to the bank, where he got the cashier to make him out a check to cash for five hundred dollars. Fish signed it with his mark and pocketed the five hundred-dollar bills. He shuffled rapidly along the street to the vacant lot.

"Is it hard to ride dat thing?" he inquired of Hot Jackson.

"Hard?" Hot Jackson recognized a customer. "You kin ride a bicycle, can't you? An' a bicycle ain't got but two wheels. Dis thing got four."

"Dat's right," Fish agreed. "How long for you to learn me?"

"I kin learn you twixt here an' yo' eat place."

"I'll give you fo' hunderd."

"You done bought you a car!"

"Le's go," said Fish, grandly drawing forth the crisp green bills.

Hot Jackson's gold canine teeth glittered in a mammoth grin. He lowered the shiny tin hood over the little engine, hopped into

the driver's seat and made room for Fish beside him. There was a roar from the unmuffled exhaust as he gave it the gas. They bumped across the sidewalk, whirled to the left, and sped like a shining blue meteor toward the asphalt of York Street. Hot Jackson was constitutionally unable to drive slowly and the engine was geared so that it had to go fast or not at all. Fish clung on with both hands and felt his kinky black hair uncurl and grow straight on his potato-shaped head.

After what seemed to Fish an unnecessarily long time spent in speeding, Hot Jackson stopped, let Fish take the driver's seat and explained to him the simplicity of the affair.

"Dis here foot clutch," he explained, "you push way in if you wants to go back. Dis other one, you pushes in to start, an' lets out for high gear—an' dat's all de gears dey is. See dat?"

Fish's previous experience with machinery had been confined to a push cart that for some years he had propelled for a delicatessen store. But he was not prone to expose his ignorance to the worldly-wise Hot Jackson.

"Is dat all dey is to it?"

"All, 'cep'n' dis brake an' dis han' throttle. You know de han' throttle on a locomotive?"

"Yeah," Fish answered untruthfully.

"Well, dis is jes' de same excep'n' a little different and they is two of 'em. One for de spark."

"I ain't seen no spark," said Fish. "Is dis thing liable to ketch on fire?"

Hot Jackson brayed loudly. "If she was goin' to burn up, reckon I'd 'a' burned her long 'fo' dis. You take de wheel an' I'll keep my foot on de clutch. Ready? Let's go!" The machine gave two jumps and changed from immobility to twenty miles an hour. Fish remained with it by clinging to the wheel. The result was not conducive to good steering. They ran up on the sidewalk and down again; and next, by their joint efforts, skimmed adventurously up York Street, around two corners and down the cobbles of Queen. Fish was several shades paler when they came finally to an ostentatious, skidding halt before the door of the Fish Kelly Eat Place.

"If you needs any advice at any time," said Hot Jackson, "jes' let me know." And he went off down the street, whistling.

Fish dismounted and inspected his new possession. It had a grim shiny efficient look that he didn't like. It reminded him of a sleeping bulldog. The sort of thing that, if you touched it, was liable to turn on you. He remembered the way it had leaped into space the two times that Hot Jackson had started it. His shudder was interrupted by Macedonia, who emerged from the restaurant.

"You got dat money?"

Recalled to his other troubles, Fish sullenly searched his pockets and drew forth the one-hundred-dollar bill that she had required.

"What you doin' drivin' Hot Jackson's car?" she demanded as she took the money.

"Tain't Hot Jackson's," he mumbled, slowly opening and closing his prominent eyes.

"Whose car is it den?"

"My car," defiantly pouted his long black lips.

"Fish Kelly!" For a moment she was speechless, looking from the car to him, and back again. "What you pay for it?"

"Fo' hunderd."

She gasped. "Now ain't dat jes' like you!" she cried shrilly. "Spendin' all dat good money on a no-count ructious thing like dat!"

"Reckon I got a right to spen' my own money," he retorted sullenly. "Reckon you spends yo' own money like you wants to." He leaned bitterly against a wooden telegraph pole.

Macedonia shook her head, gave him a single exasperated look, drew in her breath hopelessly and started off down the street. He turned and watched her trim figure crossing the cobbles at the corner toward the street where he had seen the man of the white spats. For the first time he was glad that he had bought the machine. "I'll show her!" he muttered hotly and he went in the restaurant to look for the new waitress.

The waitress was serving hog jowl and turnip greens to two early diners, so Fish sank into a chair and gave himself over to moody rumination.

"Maybe she got some business wid dat long-haired nigger," he thought hopefully.

But what business could Macedonia have with that man? Maybe to collect money from him—not to give him more. It wasn't as it should be, anyhow. A man's wife

didn't have any right to be talking to strange men unless she explained it to her husband—much less be giving them money. But, Fish decided, he had been lucky for so long he wasn't going to be mean about it. If anything new happened he felt sure it would be trouble. So if Macedonia would just keep away from that yellow peril he would be silent and forgiving. But he couldn't stand that man. The very sight of his white spats made Fish see red.

He gave up the idea of asking the waitress to go riding and went outside to watch for Macedonia's return. She was nowhere in sight but the stalwart Hot Jackson, singing lustily, was coming up the street. Hot arrived at the restaurant, braced himself with a hand against the frail glass window, and tried to focus eyes that were glassy and out of plumb.

"Habbut a li'l' ride?" he suggested.

Fish did not answer. He had become rigid at what he saw beyond the jovial Mr. Jackson's shoulder. Macedonia's high patent-leather heels were picking a way across the cobbles at the corner. Assisting her, with a palm beneath her elbow, was the yellow man of the white spats.

They turned and came up the sidewalk toward the restaurant. Fish felt numb all over. His knees began to tremble. He swallowed and his prominent Adam's apple jumped back into place with a dry *click*. There was his wife, in broad daylight, walking up the street with this green-hatted dude who was nonchalantly twirling a yellow cane the while he chatted and laughed. Fish's heart was beating like a trip hammer. It seemed more than his body could bear. They came nearer, talking and laughing. They came right up to him, and Macedonia said:

"Fish, meet Mister Washington Jones."

Fish did not see Macedonia's look of pride as she approvingly surveyed his hat and suit of a becoming funereal black. He could not know that her association with Mr. Jones was solely for the purpose of collecting the money he had deprived her of. Fish's attention was absorbed by Mr. Washington Jones, who took off his grass-green hat in an elegant bow. The sun glinted upon his perfectly straight black hair. He had a frank, youthful light-yellow face, a pinch of black mustache beneath his white-folk's nostrils. Macedonia came close to her husband.

"I wants another hunderd dollars," she murmured, while Mr. Washington Jones tactfully withdrew and rolled his beautiful brown eyes indifferently up to the blue of heaven. Fish put his black trembling hand into his pocket and gave Macedonia the last of the hundred-dollar bills. She concealed it quickly in her fist and walked over to Mr. Jones. With tacit accord they fell into step and returned along the way that they had approached.

"Easy come, easy go," murmured Hot Jackson philosophically.

Fish didn't know whether he was referring to money or wives.

"How you start dis engine?" Fish demanded fiercely.

"I'll start it for you," replied Hot willingly. "Want take li'l' ride?"

"I'll show 'em!" Fish replied. He turned to go in the restaurant after the waitress, but she was standing in the doorway, her oiled black hair sticking out stiffly, framing the grin on her square brown face. With her hands on the hips of her short red dress, she tapped a high heeled gray suede shoe and chanted the old song:

"Let her have her way,
She'll rule you eve'y day,
An' put you in yo' lonesome, lonesome
gra-a-ave!"

Fish ignored the taunt while he noticed the generous expanse of gray silk stocking and the purplish powder upon the girl's face. She would just suit the sporty blue roadster. He would show Macedonia that he could go a-projeckin' too. He grasped the waitress by the arm and dragged her to the machine.

"But dey ain't nobody to look after de rest'rant!" she objected.

"Hot Jackson will watch de place," said Fish, helping her into the roadster. Mr. Jackson careened to the front of the car and twirled the engine. Fish jumped into the driver's seat and seized the wheel.

"Turn on de lights," said Hot Jackson, "goin' be dark soon."

But at that moment the unmuffled engine started with a roar.

"Better cut down de gas!" Hot Jackson warned but Fish was oblivious of everything except Macedonia and her companion, who were chatting gayly together as they strolled down the street. His imagination already had pictured Macedonia's expression of chagrin and remorse when she saw him roll

magnificently past in his sparkling automobile, accompanied by an ostentatiously alluring young lady. He remembered vaguely the way Hot Jackson had thrown the car into motion. He pressed upon the left pedal and pushed the next pedal all the way down.

There was a hiss of spinning tires; then the rubber gripped the cobbles and the machine lurched convulsively backward. The waitress was thrown forward, her shoulders hanging over the low wind shield, and Fish was catapulted against the steering wheel. The jolt took Fish's wind, but not so the waitress. She emitted an ear-piercing scream that caused Macedonia to turn in terror and brought people running to the doors and windows.

The angle at which Fish struck the wheel probably averted a catastrophe. Instead of running straight backward, where it would have crashed into two horses attached to an ice wagon, the blue roadster raced backward across the street in a circle which took it up on the opposite sidewalk, around a telegraph pole, and back across the street again. Hot Jackson had sworn never to drink again when the car had flitted suddenly out of his hand—backward. Now it was returning to him, on the wings of the wind, still backward. He emitted a wordless yawn of fear and darted through the swing door of the restaurant, carrying the wire screen with him. But the blue roadster was not to be balked of its prey. It missed the telegraph pole in front of the restaurant by a hair and then plunged straight for Hot Jackson, taking a direct course smash through the large glass window.

The rear of the car was in the show window but the front wheels caught against the outside of the window base and left the rear wheels spinning furiously in two of Macedonia's flaky-crust-ed apple pies. The car, for a moment, was motionless, and over the roar of the unmuffled exhaust Fish, gray with terror, heard Hot Jackson's bellow.

"Lif' yo' foot! For Gawd sake lif' yo' foot!"

Fish had at the time almost no control of his faculties. But the advice must have reached his nerves for he tentatively lifted the generous feet which were pressing down upon the pedals.

No sooner had he done so than he regretted it bitterly—although too late. From a grateful state of immobility the roadster leaped suddenly forward, tore itself free of

the window with a renewed crash of splintering glass; and before Fish had time either to curse or pray he found himself hurtling down Queen Street at hair-raising speed, the notice of his coming bruited abroad by the siren screams of the waitress. He was subconsciously aware of Macedonia, with arms outstretched, running after him; of a gentleman with a green hat and open, astonished mouth on the sidewalk. But almost before these impressions had time to register he had reached the blind end of Queen Street, had pulled the wheel to the left, so that the car skidded twice around, had been up on the sidewalk and down again, and was speeding once more straight ahead. A policeman stepped from the sidewalk into the car's path and raised a commanding hand. There was a slight bump. But the only change this made to Fish was that thereafter his outlook was obscured by a policeman's hat, plastered against the wind shield.

A whirling skid around another corner threw him into York Street—the white-folks' section of the town, where the street was asphalt. The blue roadster leaped appreciatively forward down the straightaway.

Fish, at the wheel, had fallen into a state not far from coma. This was only the second time he had ever driven a car. Terror had done all to him that terror could. His tar-black complexion was a mottled gray, his hat had long since gone, leaving his kinky potato-shaped cranium bare, and his shrill pink tie stood straight out behind his neck like a band of hot steel. He merely clung to the wheel, endeavoring by a twist here and a twist there to avoid this hurtling universe of trees, telephone poles, frightened horses, old gentlemen, fire plugs, automobiles and street cars which was being thrown giddily at his head. At one moment he found he was roaring directly toward a partly open draw bridge. The continuous scream of the waitress arose to a higher pitch. He closed his eyes. There was a slight bump and he held his breath, waiting for the impact against the water. After an interminable interval he opened his eyes and found that he was speeding along a suddenly deserted street, the drawbridge far behind. It was after this that he lost all sense of feeling.

He had no thought as to where he was, except a dim idea that he had been going long enough and fast enough to be at least halfway across the State. He had no time

to identify the scenery; besides, it was gone so quickly there was hardly any use. The screams of the waitress had worn down to a hoarse moaning buzz. But of a sudden her screams increased in volume as if she had awakened again to some faint hope of rescue before annihilation. And Fish noticed that the color of the babies and old gentlemen that he was nearly killing had changed from white to brown; the streets became more bumpy, so that the racing car bucked like a broncho; and it was a brown policeman who occasionally raised a commanding hand—and then leaped wildly for the sidewalk. He knew he must have circled back again into the colored district.

Into Fish's darkened mind there crept a ray of light. Far ahead, on the sidewalk, he descried a cane, a pair of white spats and a grass-green hat. He had long since given up any hope of ever getting out of this lunatic speedster alive. Instinctively he decided to join death with revenge. He turned the wheel slightly and leaped over the low curb. The man in the green hat saw the blue car racing after him up the sidewalk, and hurried to cross the street. The car turned to follow him. With a final wild glance over his shoulder the pursued man abandoned hat and cane and fled for the vacant lot across the street. But he had started too late, not reckoning upon the speed of the pursuit. Barely had he crossed the second sidewalk than the roaring car was upon him. The right fender caught him neatly at the bottom of his coat. The white spats rose twelve feet in the air and described a beautiful backward curve. Fish swerved the car to the right in an effort to dodge the back fence. Its left front wheel caved in; its nose dipped and struck the ground. The waitress, moving too fast to scream, passed over Fish's head, grabbing his coat en route and taking him with her. They were thrown far from the car—a rolling puzzle of red skirt, black suit and unidentified arms and legs. Not sure whether they were dead or alive they scrambled to their feet and looked dazedly about.

The demon roadster, not to be daunted, had churned forward over its broken wheel and had impacted with a bang against the cobblestone wall that bounded the right of the lot. As they stared, a thin wisp of lavender smoke rose through the hinge of its bright tin hood. Then, quicker than the eye could see, a sheet of yellow flame ran up-

ward, supporting a small cloud of dirty gray smoke; and in another moment the whole blue body was a mass of fire.

"Was fo' hunder dollars," said Fish, "now it's smoke!" He suddenly felt sick. A crowd of dark pop-eyed children, of buxom colored ladies with soap suds up to their bare elbows, of tobacco-chewing colored gentlemen, had begun to gather round the sizzling car. Fish began to edge toward the street, away from this unpleasant publicity. But before he had reached the sidewalk he heard a mellow voice directed at him in accents of anger.

"I goin' to sue you for dis!" It was the high-yellow gentleman, limping. One of his white spats was missing; the maroon of his suit was mixed with streaks of clay. "This goin' to cost you a thousan' dollars. You see!"

"Me too!" cried the sporty waitress, sniffing as she viewed a Marathon run in her gray silk stocking. "You goin' to pay for this—you crazy, black, good-for-nothin', spindly, no-'count, liver-lip, bug-eyed—"

Fish recognized that the sporty waitress' epithets were rising to such a thrilling climax that she would have to find relief for her feelings in action. He ducked through an opening in the crowd and shuffled hurriedly up the sidewalk toward Queen Street. Black head bare, his tall thin frame drooped in dejection, he looked almost as gloomy as he felt.

"I knowed if anything happen it was goin' to be bad," he told himself miserably. "Fo' hunder dollars burned up. Macedonia sho' goin' to hate me—now I done los' all dat money. An' she givin' all she got to dat yaller jacket." His throat closed with an ache; he blinked his black lids over his prominent white eyeballs. "Nigger luck. I sho' got dat all right."

Behind him he heard the clanging bell of a fire engine. He wheeled, expecting to see it turn into the vacant lot to extinguish the embers of his car. But, instead, it came straight up the street, passed him and raced ahead, its shining nickel stack spouting a whirl of gray smoke and tiny sparks into the gathering dusk. This was the big engine, reserved for major fires, and behind it rolled the unwieldy length of the hook and ladder. Fish, however, was too depressed to be interested even in a fire and he reverted to the melancholy of his thoughts:

"Nigger luck!" he repeated, with ironic

bitterness. He thought of how in the course of a single day he had practically lost his wife, lost his automobile, representing four hundred dollars, lost the two hundred dollars that Macedonia had taken out of their joint account to give the high-yellow gentleman—and on top of all this he would be sued for damages by the yellow man and the waitress. He had spent the rest of his money stocking and refurbishing the restaurant and the restaurant now was all that he had left in the world. As he shuffled moodily along the uneven brick pavement he ignored the men, women and children who were running by him on their way to the fire, the red glow of which could be seen against the dusky sky. He made his plans. His good luck had been followed by bad luck. But out of the wreckage he still had the restaurant. He would run that very carefully. He should be able to make a living out of that; and maybe if he were patient Macedonia's thrifty interest in the success of the restaurant would bring her back to him. He felt slightly heartened. He turned the corner into Queen Street.

Against the opposite curb stood the nickled fire engine, red embers beneath it on the cobbles, its stack, under forced draft, spouting sheafs of sparks, while two uniformed firemen raced toward the corner fire plug with their reel of flat hose. Fish Kelly looked beyond the fire engine, to the right, and saw black smoke pouring out of the front of a white one-story building. Through a rift in the writhing darkness appeared for an instant a streak of red letters against the white background of a sign.

The Fish Kelly Eat Place was a mass of smoke and flame.

Fish's knees turned to water, his breath became short and he leaned weakly against the corner house by his side. The restaurant, too, was gone. Gone now was everything. He felt actually ill. And then through his lassitude shot the thought: "Macedonia!" Was Macedonia safe? He galvanized into a shambling gallop across the cobbles.

On the other sidewalk his arm was grabbed by Hot Jackson, who was quite sober but crying.

"Fish, when I lit de lamp on de table it caught fire to de curtain. While I was fightin' de curtain I knocked de lamp over an' its oil come out an' begun to burn. I didn't mean to—"

"Macedonia!" cried Fish fiercely. "Where at is Macedonia?"

"Last time I seen her," said Hot Jackson, wiping his eyes, "was just after de fire started. She run into de rest'rant."

Fish flung off Hot Jackson's hand and rushed ahead. A white policeman, at the fire line, would have headed him off but Fish ducked under his arm. The heat in front of the restaurant was singeing and almost unbearable.

A red tongue of flame darted through the rear side window and licked the white clapboards of the one-story building. Through the broken front window the inside of the restaurant seemed merely a mass of twisting black smoke, lighted once and again by a flicker of flame. Was Macedonia in that furnace? Fish peered, with smarting eyes. A window in the rear burst outward with a crash. In the resulting draft the black smoke veered and thinned. It opened for an instant and Fish's heart leaped as he saw Macedonia's red hat, beneath it the outline of her coat.

He thought it was Macedonia herself. It did not occur to him that if it had been Macedonia she would hardly have been standing upright and motionless in the center of the room. He did not remember the coat tree upon which earlier in the day he had seen her hang her hat and coat. The smoke swirled back and the restaurant interior became a dense choking black mass pierced by thrusts of flame. He had lost his money, he had lost Macedonia's love—he still had his life. It would be easy to let the approaching policeman drag him away. Tomorrow he could tell his friends that only the policeman had kept him from dashing into the fire to save Macedonia, or join her in death. But at the thought of being dragged away, to leave Macedonia alone in the flames, he cried aloud:

"Honey! Honey! I's comin'!" and ran headlong into the wall of smoke.

The heat was terrific, like a hot coal, and the smoke forced him to hold his breath and close his eyes. The invisible flames ahead of him made a dry crackling sound. He groped forward, stumbling against tables and chairs. The heat seemed to press against him, as if it would crush him, while from within his breast the kept air was fighting like a wild beast to escape. Torn between the two forces, he felt giddy and weak. But Macedonia needed him and she

was only a little way ahead. His chest was bursting—he let out his breath and gasped for air. The stinging smoke poured into his nose and throat. He seemed to be drowning in a deep sea of fumes. He reached out his arms and stumbled forward. He must reach her and save her before he gave in. His fingers touched first the rough straw of her hat, then the softness of the coat. His throat opened to a strangled cry. "Honey!" He stooped to lift her, but giddiness overcame him. The earth whirled beneath his feet—came straight up and struck him. "Honey, we dies together!"

Darkness.

When next he opened his eyes Fish was sure that he must be dead. Instead of the twisting, choking black smoke of the restaurant he saw the familiar red wall paper of the family's Queen Street room. On the table beside him was the homely yellow-shaded reading lamp. He looked down to see that he was fully clothed, except for his coat, and he recognized Macedonia's bright home-made crazy quilt beneath him. He tried to move and see more but his neck and head and arms were bandaged and the motion caused him acute pain.

He had moved enough to see who was seated beside the table, turning in her hands the charred remnant of a red straw hat. And then he knew that he was indeed dead and that the angels had taken him to heaven. For there, in her blue-and-white-checked waist and dark blue skirt sat Macedonia. And although she must have been burned to death, the same time that he was, her oval light-brown face, her rounded forearms, were unbandaged and showed no scars. Fish heaved a thankful sigh. Heaven wouldn't be heaven if his Macedonia were all scarred up. He was so weak that a tear trickled over his thin black face.

She looked up at his sigh, came over and knelt beside the bed.

"How is my man? How is my hero man what thought I was in de rest'rant?"

Fish smiled weakly at the note of fondness in his wife's voice.

"De firemen couldn't bus' yo' arms loose from dat coat tree. Fish, honey, I goin' to always keep dat ol' burned hat." She put an arm gently across his chest. "Even if you was a-projekin' wid dat waitress!"

"Honey," said Fish faintly, not yet sure that he was alive, "you knows I jes' com-

mence a-projeckin' wid her 'cause you got sweet on dat yaller man. Dat's de reason I bought dat car. I couldn't stand to be seenin' you wid him."

"Oh, honey, is dat de reason why?"

"Ouch," cried Fish, "leggo my neck! You ain't tole me 'bout you an' dat fancy nigger."

"Oh, honey, don't you understand? I jes' went after him to collect what he owe me."

"Look mo' like he was collectin' from you!"

"I know it, honey. Dat nigger's a talker. He 'suade me to take insurance wid his company—so he could pay me what he owe me out of his commissions. So I 'sured de rest 'gainst fire an' flood an' plate glass an' we gwine git back what it cost us."

"You mean somebody goin' pay us a thousan' dollars?"

"Sho'. Dat's what I spent mos' of dat hundred for."

"It don't sound probable," replied Fish. He painfully sat up and scratched his potato-shaped head with a bandaged hand. "Is you sho' I is alive—an' not in heaben?"

"Sho' you is alive," she answered. "You is only scotched."

"Well," ne asserted, characteristically pessimistic, "anyway—de car done burned up. An' dat cost fo' hunderd. An' dat yaller nigger an' de waitress goin' sue me for damage."

"Don't make no matter," replied Macedonia. "Soon as I seen you'd bought dat car I run down an' 'sured it aginst fire, accident, an' suits, too."

Fish's popped eyeballs were white against his thin black face. "You mean somebody goin' pay me for dat car, an' pay for de suit?" Things were again taking on the unreality of heaven. He grew dizzy.

"Cert'n'y!"

"Well," he answered, as if hoping that there was at least some bad news to make things seem real, "anyway, I gwine be laid up an' can't work for a spell."

"Don't matter, honey. I knowed you was goin' be fool enough to drive dat car yo' ownself so I 'sured you aginst accidents, deployment, disease and desanity. You kin jes' stay in bed an' eat chicken long as you wish—an' it ain't goin' cost a cent."

Fish laid back upon his pillow.

"I jes' knowed I was dead!" he said resignedly as he closed his eyes.



THE UNFATUOUS FATHER

EVEN a wise father usually harbors plenty of illusions about his own offspring. But if a story that has achieved wide success along the thronging boulevards and in the brilliant salons of France's laughing capital this season has any foundation in fact there is at least one father who knows what's what even where his own young hopefuls are concerned.

The tale is of an aged but sprightly silk manufacturer of Lyons who on a visit to Paris chanced upon a schoolday friend whom he had not seen for half a century. After the customary expressions of gratification at the happy reunion the friend evinced an interest in the family history of his erstwhile school chum.

"So," said he, "you are a husband and father of long standing?"

"But perfectly, my old one."

"What luck! I, as you see, am still a lonely bachelor. And how many children have you?"

"Six—all boys."

"Ah, it is of a magnificence! And what are they doing? Splendid fellows and great successes, I'll wager."

"Oh, undoubtedly. The first is in the diplomatic service. The second is also a bit of a stupid ass.

"The third is a financier. The fourth also has narrowly escaped jail.

"The fifth was decorated for distinguished service in the war. The sixth never saw any action either.

"I am proud of them!"



The Last Phantom

By Theodore Seixas Solomons

Author of "The 'All-time-go' Man," "The Bandanna Bird," Etc.

Mark Howard didn't believe in spooks, but The Last Phantom saved his life.

MARK HOWARD told me this story himself and I am convinced that it is true, for several reasons.

In the first place, I myself had an experience once that strongly savored of the thing that happened to him. In the next place, I have known the man all my life. We went into Alaska together and lived and worked there together for six months before we separated. He is one of the most truthful and colorlessly matter-of-fact persons I have ever known—which probably makes the phenomenon itself the more remarkable. In the third place, I have learned that his experience accords perfectly with the findings of abnormal psychology.

The reason I tell the story in the third person is because the thing that to my mind is the most difficult to believe—though it is not the most interesting circumstance by any means—needs the explanation of some one who knows the man himself, the kind of a man he was physically, to be specific. I'll come to that later.

Howard had been mining all winter in the Fortymile country and having his usual luck! In the spring he went to work sluicing for one of the big outfits on a near-by creek. They had a lot of low-grade dirt

to shovel in; it was a long job and they did not finish until the hills were bare of snow and you could go overland anywhere on foot. That suited Howard first rate because he wanted to get to Circle City as soon as he could to meet some men with whom he had arranged to cross the Yukon-Tanana divide to the newly discovered placers of Fairbanks.

He figured—correctly enough—that from where he was, away up on a branch of the Fortymile, it would be easier and quicker to hike it across the western tributaries and on to the network of creeks running into the Yukon south of Circle than it would be to go on down the Fortymile to the Yukon and then virtually double back down that river to his destination. He knew he was a good walker—though he did *not* know how exceptionally good!—and he certainly did not know how poor was his sense of location—though I did; but unfortunately I was not there to warn him.

He started in the morning carrying absolutely nothing but a couple of sandwiches. He intended making a certain road house whose location had been described to him on Charlie Creek. It was a stiff walk but he expected to make it by six or seven o'clock in the afternoon. The route led

along certain ridges between small creeks of the Fortymile watershed.

The Yukon basin is peculiar. Except for the big delta at the lower end and the Yukon Flats below Porcupine River there is no area of valley land in all its tremendous expanse from British Columbia to the Bering Sea. It is hills, hills—illimitable hills separated by a vast network of long gulches twisting and turning with the streams that drain them. Unless you know well a given locality you have nothing to guide you except the general direction of the main river itself and its nearest large confluent.

Thus, when Howard discovered—after he had walked all night—that he had missed the tributary of Charlie Creek and was on unfamiliar ground—being now out of the Fortymile watershed—he realized that all he knew of the lay of the land was that the Yukon was northward and the Tanana, its largest left-hand branch, was southward. But he felt sure that farther on—northwestward—he would come upon trails and that these would lead to road houses. There was where he made his mistake. A man with a better knowledge of Yukon topography would have known that the region toward which he was bending his footsteps was a very sparsely mined one and that his chance was mighty small. He had eaten his two sandwiches at noon and of course he was ravenously hungry. It was the middle of May, light all night, and he had no difficulty whatever in seeing the caribou trails on which he walked along the divides between the gulches.

Notwithstanding the unsettled condition of this part of the Yukon he undoubtedly would have come upon trails leading to some camp had it not been for the fact that the spring freshets, converting every considerable tributary into a small, raging river, obliged him to keep pretty well along the southerly divide of Charlie Creek and its western neighbor. Pushed thus practically to the headwaters of the Tanana he was in unprospected country, in a maze of gulches that had rarely if ever been traversed.

By noon next day he had walked for thirty hours; and being tired and a little faint from hunger—that was what his ravenous appetite had changed to—he thought he'd rest and sleep. But the mosquitoes would not let him. So he drank water, tightened his trousers belt and "mushed"

on. He felt first rate when he got going again—light and clean and not overhungry.

Somewhat to his surprise he found himself walking on and on through the evening into the twilight of midnight, and still on as it became lighter, the sun higher, the air warmer; and by nine o'clock, about, he thought it was warm enough to be able to sleep. He was on a treeless divide where he could not make a fire, though he purposed doing that—walking down to the spruce timber and making a smudge—if the mosquitoes bothered him.

The mosquitoes *did* bother him. They seemed to rise up from nowhere in spite of the fact that he was on a ridge. Wet moss, he found, fostered mosquitoes; and wet moss in Alaska is everywhere. He cursed himself for not having any netting, but of course he had not expected to sleep out. He fought mosquitoes for an hour or so—drowsily—and then decided that he would walk again and dip down into the nearest spruce timber. He was no longer hungry. He felt queer, but well, and fairly strong.

He carried out his intention, veering at an angle down a hill to a near-by clump of woods. That was about noon or a little after. Then when he tried to start a fire he found that his matches were wet from dampness that had pierced his overalls when, earlier in the day, he had lain down to sleep in the moss. Disgusted, he threw them away, set his teeth—and walked! He turned at an upward angle and gaining the divide again, struck into a moose trail that bore him west, southwest, northwest—according to the curves and twists of the ridge.

That was the afternoon of the third day. He had had nothing to eat for over fifty hours and had rested but two or three hours, sleeping not at all. But he walked on steadily enough and this was the reason:

Mark Howard was, physically, a very unusual man. He was under medium height, compactly built, with a well-knit, muscular frame. He was naturally strong, probably. But however that may be, at least it is certain that from his earliest youth he had cultivated an unusual strength. He had never been an athlete nor taken part in any sports or exercises. But his lot had been that of a man who is more or less continually engaged in work that is preponderantly physical; and in all that he did he never used his brain—which was a very good one for other purposes—to save his muscles. It was

instinctive to him to put forth all of his energy all of the time! And thus he had become possessed of a muscular system of a quality that enabled him in emergencies—he probably was not aware of the fact himself—to sustain a given exertion for twice or thrice as long as the average healthy outdoor man of his age, which was thirty-five. He was used to walking over the very trying surface of interior Alaska. He was fresh from the splendid setting up of a protracted period of sluicing. He was fit to the *n*th degree!

But the strains he underwent in this forced march without rest or sleep were more than muscular strains. His nervous system was not equal to the tasks to which his tremendous physical endurance subjected it. He himself discovered that fact next day—the fourth day.

The third night he hoped for sleep, failed to get it—though the mosquitoes had not been numerous, it being rather too cool for them—and wondered if he had better persevere in the effort to sleep, even to letting the mosquitoes bite him at will. Suddenly it occurred to him that since he was running a race with starvation he had better keep going as long as he could. It was common sense that in sleeping he would be continuing to use up his body fuel, even though the rate would be slower. He might be compelled to rest in order to keep going but he reasoned that if he were to *rest* before he absolutely had to that meant he would stagger and fall some *miles* before he had to—some miles, it might be, before running into a camp.

The reasoning might have been wrong. But it was a sane enough process of thought and acting on it Howard arose and resumed his march.

He soon came to the end of that ridge, descended into the gulch, and seeing it to be long and swampy, walked along the left margin, gradually rising again from the downward-sloping valley by keeping a level course along the hillside. That hillside grew mountainous and rocky after a few miles and he was subjected to a peculiarly trying experience in continuing along it. This was the only incident of what might be called a topographic nature that happened to him throughout the whole adventure, though it would not, because of that, be worth recounting in a story of the nature of his. But to it Howard is inclined to

ascribe what happened after. I do not agree with him; nevertheless the incident ought to be told. He came upon a region of mountainside which was steep, where there was no earth, only rocks of all sizes from sharp particles of gravel to boulders of the bulk of buildings. Rocks, here and there, all along the mountainside, and at all elevations, as far as he could see in the lessened light of the late afternoon, were detaching themselves from their tenuous bedding and rolling down the mountain. It was a spring phenomenon, the snows and frosts of winter having produced new instabilities in this immense, forbidding "slide."

Howard treaded his cautious way along but became unnerved by the startling effects of these detaching boulders. He frequently toiled far uphill to keep on the upper side of a threatening rock. He himself started many avalanches. He was more conscious of his empty stomach and of its effects upon him through this ordeal than he had been before or was afterward. The passage of that three or four miles of dangerous rock slope "took more out of him" than all the days of his starvation hike. He was sweat wet and shaking when he found solid hillside once more and the first thing he did was find a place to rest.

He thought he would have given his life for sleep, but he only imagined he was sleepy—it was only his ardent longing for some respite from the ague of mind and nerves in which he had emerged from the rock-avalanche zone. When he lay down he began to see the rock slide when he closed his eyes; and when his thoughts wandered from that they brought back the scene of sluicing on Fortymile River—and other recent scenes and places and things.

He had developed a case of insomnia and he knew it. He might have conquered it but for the mosquitoes, those deadly pests of the early Northern summer. So what does he do but arise again and resume his wearisome journey, drinking occasionally at little streams coursing down the hillside—for water was everywhere—but rarely thinking of food. He had constantly a peculiar feeling in his body which he had never known before. It was not distressing, not a gnawing feeling. Physically he could not associate it with hunger though of course his intelligence told him it was caused by lack of food.

It was about four o'clock in the morning

when happening to glance *backward* and down into the valley bottom he saw a camp and men sluicing!

He was delighted—naturally. And yet he frowned, wondering and disgusted to think that he had actually passed along the hillside above that part of the valley, which was now about a mile and a half back of him, without noticing the camp. He walked back obliquely along the hillside and down toward the creek bottom, occasionally glancing at the sluicing gang. Water, he judged, was getting scarce at the source from which these men were taking it, or they would not have put on a night shift. He counted eight boxes, with two or three men to each of the seven boxes above the tail box. He noted these details when he had lessened his original distance by about half.

He trudged on, gradually nearing the bottom of the valley; and the next time he glanced at the scene he was surprised to notice that the sluice line seemed shorter. There were but six boxes. He supposed, of course, that he had erred before. But once again, after rounding a little knoll that had hid the miners from his view, he stopped and was mystified to observe that there were now but five boxes and a correspondingly smaller number of men,

He had to account for this in some way, so he decided that the head boxes had been withdrawn, and this by coincidence just when the outfit had been hidden from his view. But as, increasing his pace—all fatigue forgotten—he glanced again, another sluice box had miraculously disappeared, with two or more men. He laughed at the weird performance—and marveled. He was without theory now. When there were only three sluice boxes he tried to fix the scene with his eye, defying it to change while thus he held it steadily. But he could not avoid glancing away once, and when his eye returned to the scene, two seconds later, presto! There were only two box lengths. He had to glance down while he jumped a side stream. One box, one man were left! It was the tail box.

His way was now clear and tolerably smooth and he vowed he would never once take his eyes away from that man and that box. Nor did he. But in a few moments he saw the man stoop, shoulder the sluice box and walk off with it into the brush. He kept his eye glued to that moving object—a T-shaped thing—until it disappeared. It

could have been a natural disappearance and he clung to that idea, holding the brush with his eye, stumbling sometimes, but never looking away—until he came to it.

It was—just brush. There was no tailings pile, no pay dirt, no camp—nothing!

Mark Howard sat down on a boulder and stroked his chin. "Hallucination!" he whispered to himself. Then he said it aloud—and imputed this utterly new experience to the wear and tear of the avalanche mountain upon his nervous system. He laughed good-naturedly and retraced his way down the valley and up the hill—and on, drinking and walking. It was bright day now.

As he toiled on he insisted on persuading himself that if it had been broad daylight, such a light as reveals details—little things that the reason could work upon—he could not have been deceived in his senses. He knew he was perfectly sane and therefore he felt that with sufficient *evidence* no mere aberration of the single sense of sight could "get" him.

That conviction remained until, early in the afternoon, at the very height of the sun's power, he saw another camp, below and beyond, this time, not back of him. There were both tents and cabins, five camps in all, and several men in sight. Between the camps were two dumps with the usual windlass in the center of each. Here was the real thing. He was conscious of saliva!

Then began the disheartening wiping out again—first one thing, then another. By the time he was within a hundred yards of what had been the nearest object of man's creation—a dirty tent it was, with an irregular pile of wood for burning down outside it—the tent whisked into thin air and the wood became bushes of slightly different contour from their nearest neighbors. Howard thought he could pick out some special natural object for each tent, cabin and dump of the mirage that had been. Each of these was either a shimmer of water, a rock, a bush, a specially light or specially dark bit of ground. He was *through* with these hallucinations!

There were two more days to his adventure—six in all. This healthy man, who had used no liquor in his life, little tea or coffee, whose habits had been good and regular habits, whose life had been largely an outdoor life—this Hercules of endurance went on for forty-eight hours longer over the ridges, dipping into side gulches when he

had to cross them, keeping northwest in his general course, doggedly winning onward toward the Yukon.

He was always amused but never in the least excited by what he saw in those wild, empty, narrow, winding stream valleys—the camps, the tents, the cabins, the strings of sluice boxes—in a word, the objects with which he had of late years associated his fellow beings, to whom now his subconscious as well as his conscious mind looked for succor!

That was it, of course. That was the theory he evolved to account for the hallucinations. What he needed—and mighty urgently now, for he felt his strength to be almost gone—was a camp. It was too early for berries. He had no weapon to shoot game, nor hook and line for fish. Therefore he *must* come upon a camp—men. How natural, therefore, that this powerful wish should be father to the thought—the *visual* thought! In other words, the hallucination.

At the end of the sixth day, about five in the afternoon, he saw the last string of sluice boxes—saw it, that is, until he passed it. For latterly he had not taken the trouble to alter his course by so much as an extra rod of walking to investigate any of these cruel delusions. Some of the visions had persisted as far as he could see them. The fading out had come, during that last day or two, only when he had walked right into the "camp."

He had seen that last one—a string of sluice boxes—perhaps half an hour before. Since that time he had had to descend to the creek, for a large confluent stream compelled it. This was his Waterloo! The stream was swollen, deep, swift, ice cold. He doubted if he ever could have crossed it. In his present condition—his weakness was such that his pace could not have been more than a mile an hour—he was perfectly sure that it meant death to wade out into that water.

There was a chance—a chance in a hundred with Yukon streams in that great alluvial basin—that there might be rocks a little below and a constricting of the water—a chance to jump from rock to rock. As he went staggering along the bank he saw his final mirage, The Last Phantom. A horse browsing on the hillside was the first of it. A little farther down—yes, there was the inevitable cabin. Soon he would see

that infernal, damnable, imaginary string of sluice boxes, and men shoveling in.

He was wrong about those last items—sluice boxes did not happen to set themselves into this particular picture.

He came upon a knoll, painfully climbed it and looked up and downstream. He could see at least two miles of the straight-running creek and it was everywhere wide and rapid. He was very, very tired and with the hopelessness of that view the last of his courage, of his will to live, left him and he lay down in the willow brush and gazed somberly at the hill, the sky, and the brawling, boulder-choked young river that in two or three weeks would be easily fordable. He wondered how long it was to be before he died. He feared only the disfiguring of the mosquitoes.

From the mirage cabin, which was now almost opposite him across the creek and some hundred yards up the slope, a mirage man appeared, carrying something. In default of other occupation Howard lazily watched him—or it, rather. It came down to the stream, set a bucket on the ground, took from it a pan and a knife, took from the pail, next, some potatoes and began paring and throwing them into the pan.

Howard would not have stirred; he would have gone on watching the man—or the image of the man—until it vanished, except for one circumstance. To that circumstance he owes his life!

He heard a bell.

He glanced over to where he had seen the horse and now saw several.

Attached to the neck of one was the bell he heard—or thought he heard. It was a clear enough sound—to his imagined sense of hearing.

Up to that time only his eyes had been subject to hallucination. He had never imagined that he heard a sound. He knew that an auditory hallucination is just as common or even more common than a visual hallucination; and he had, therefore, no more confidence in the one than in the other. But just because he had not *actually* been deceived in a sound during his three days of hallucination, some obstinate thing in him suggested that this scene might conceivably be different from the others.

With that thought came another, bolstering it. He seemed to remember that the men in all the previous cinemas of his fancy continued to move just as they did when he

first saw them. Sluicers shoveled and walkers walked—and did nothing else. A man carrying whipsawn boards went back and forth regularly. But here was a man who walked down from a cabin and went through a number of movements, all quite different.

Even now the semblance dipped water from the stream and washed its peeled and bisected spuds. This was particularly new. The horses, too, had variety, range of movement, and the bell tinkled irritably when flies—or imaginary flies—tantalized the imaginary horse.

Laughing at himself for his credulity Howard rose and with as much force as he could summon shouted "Hullo!"

The figure seemed to be getting ready to return to the cabin. It made no answer, the damned spook! Just as Howard expected. The famished, dying man sank down again.

But Howard was an obstinate person—obstinate with his own idea notwithstanding he himself believed it to be a ridiculous idea. It suddenly occurred to him that men so near that brawling stream could not hear each other. The spook might have *seen* Howard if he had peered hard at the willow brush across the stream. But the spook had not peered. So Howard retreated from the bank to higher ground from which the sound vibrations of his voice would not be lost in the chaos of air vibrations from the tossing water. There he waited until the phantom on the other side, bucket in hand, had reached a similar position. Then he shouted.

The phantom turned and looked at him.

Mark Howard was conscious of a pleasant titillation of the fancy. Why, hang it, the cuss was real! Undulating from the knees to the shoulders he gently slumped to the ground and knew no more.

You will find another Solomons story, "The Sacred Right of Bean Peddling," in the next issue.



RUNNING NO RISKS

MRS. CHAMP CLARK once had a servant girl who was Irish and who did not give up her job even when she decided to get married, the prospective bridegroom being a handsome and towering young Swede. The morning of the wedding day, however, the girl went to Mrs. Clark with all her savings and asked her to take charge of them.

"Very well, Mary," said Mrs. Clark, altogether mystified; "but I thought you were going to get married to-day."

"I am that," agreed Mary. "But do you s'pose I'd keep all that money in the house with that big stranger?"

"Come on, pardner," said the ex-spook about half an hour later. "Get your leg over."

Howard felt himself being assisted into a small poling boat.

"What's that? Oh, yes, sure," he said, thinking he was answering the man; but in reality four or five minutes had elapsed and his rescuer was getting him out of the boat on the other side.

He walked groggily up the sloping bank into the cabin, assisted by the erstwhile potato peeler. There was another man in the cabin and a third came in after a few minutes. Howard, from a bunk, talked to them a little at a time. He imagined he was talking continuously.

At supper they fed him a very small amount of well-cooked oatmeal and canned milk, told him to go to sleep and they'd give him something more like a feed at breakfast time. He was not in the least hungry and the tablespoonful of mush felt like a bale of hay in his stomach. He slept and in the morning—as he thought it—asked the fellow who seemed cook whether he had overslept.

"Some," said the latter, "seein' you've missed four meals!"

The creek was Joe-Bill Creek. A trail had run along there toward the Tanana but it was abandoned the winter before in favor of a nearer route. The cabin was a road house. The men were there to transfer their supplies, stove and other equipment to the new route. They had come with the pack horses the day Howard arrived—at the other bank. The next day they would have gone. Only on that one day of the year could Mark Howard have been saved.

As it was they had to wait over an extra day—until Howard woke up!



A Man of Principle

By Thomas McMorrow

Author of "The Man of Three Lives," "Out of the Deep Sea," Etc.

This story of Mr. McMorrow's is different in tone but it is such a powerful and human narrative, it affords such a valuable insight into certain phases of politics in any of our large cities, and it is, moreover, so absorbingly interesting that we decided to publish it. What do you think of it?

(A Two-Part Story—Part I.)

CHAPTER I.

ALL his life long he was known as Little Amby. Even when he was five years old none of the housewives around Grand Street ever exclaimed, even to his mother, "What a fine big boy you got, Mrs. Hinkle!" When they heard his age they looked hard at him where he sat behind his mother's refreshment stand, looking back at them with big and black and meditative eyes, and then they compressed their lips and said "Mm-mph!" That was their very best, and his mother, who was an open-eyed business woman, was at once resentful and grateful. God love him, he wasn't much of a child, her little Amby.

His mother was an enormous woman—two hundred and sixty pounds when she gave over weighing herself in despair—and when she breathed the counter rose and fell gently and when she moved or laughed the bottles of horse-radish and ketchup fell over; five manikins such as Little Amby could have rested their chins on the counter

and looked over into Grand Street and found room. She did not move much; every morning she came from her tenement room and settled herself into the space between the bootblack stand and the "Family Entrance" to the corner saloon, and built her counter before her and set out her wares, and sat there inert but watchful until the day was done and the lamplighter came with his flaming stick.

She sold boiled shrimps at five for a cent, with as much mayonnaise dressing as the purchaser could dig out of the bowl by using one shrimp as a spoon. She sold Saint John's bread, which were things like banana peels dried black, woody things full of seeds to break any one's teeth, but a savory and nourishing article of diet no doubt to a saint who was brought up to eat locusts. For a cent a paperful she sold crushed ice over which she had poured a red fluid or a green, according to the preference of the customer for strawberry or mint. For a cent she sold pieces of coconut out of a pail of water and for two cents pieces

of factory-made pie, and for three she gave watermelon. Three-cent sales were her largest, except once when a tipsy man bought a whole coconut to throw at a nagging policeman. With hardly a grunt of discomfort she could reach from one end of her counter to the other; from the gas-heated platter whereon hamburgers and frankfurters hissed for the attention of adult passers-by to the long stick with which she struck at thievish little fingers at the coconut pail.

Little Amby was the envy of all the children roundabout; the sight of him sitting there in the midst of all that heart could wish soured them against Fortune. Freckled little Irish lads, sons of bricklayers and plasterers and longhoremens, shook their hard little fists at him and promised to lay for him. Black-browed little Jewish lads, whose bearded fathers sold collar buttons and shoe laces and parlor matches and nothing at all worth having would come to the counter under pretense of business and would lash out underneath at Little Amby's shins. Italian lads, little cherubs with faces of smoky pink and piled black curls and beautiful eyes, would smile at him and try to get him to stretch out his hand to be hit with a barrel stave.

He could have squared himself with his generation by putting himself in the way of an occasional punching and he could have made himself universally respected and admired by handing out a few heavy punches himself. But he did neither, for he loved law and order and hated violence and riot. Whether this predilection was the normal and sane instinct of every person of property functioning in him or whether it was the natural reaction of a frail and sensitive lad beset by hulking and brigandish gutter snipes—there it was; he had it. Very early in his career he came to regard the forces of government as friendly; he was very young as well as very small when he slipped a Saint John's bread into the hand of a policeman to buy a safe convoy home.

"He do be an ould-fashioned child, that same Little Amby of yours, ma'am," said the street cleaner, peppering his smoking hamburger. "It would be a good job, so it would, if my Dinny had half the head of him!"

"My, what a smart boy!" said the push-cart peddler, repocketing his lead dime. "On bad money he cuts his teeth, ain't it,

ma'am? That I should live until you die in the poorhouse with such a business man in the family!"

He learned that the parents of the boys who overawed him were not themselves necessarily bullying and ruffianly and would not make common cause with their offspring. This surprised him; he had of nature a tribal conception of human society. Thus, when Ikey Samuelson, standing afar off, hit him with a potato, and Mrs. Hinkle brought him to lay a complaint with the rabbi who was Ikey's father, Little Amby thought the mission ill advised and expected confidently that the rabbi would only pelt him with further potatoes. Instead of which the rabbi apologized and went and took Ikey and held him by an ear and cuffed him. And after Mike Sperduti had shoved him from a dock to see if he could swim Mike Sperduti's father cursed Mike heartily, using American curses, and promised to kill Mike that very evening. Little Amby was delighted to find that his enemies, who jeered at policemen and wiggled their fingers from their noses at his mother, were themselves under law and subject to sanctions—as delighted, say, as is a zoölogist who discovers that some strange and anarchic beast, some seeming sport, is related beyond question to a known and respected order of *fauna*.

Little Amby had found one way to cope with his enemies; he became a talebearer; when injured he lodged a complaint with the authorities—with parent, school principal, truant officer, probation officer. He found that the group of youngsters to which circumstances had allotted him was bossed by the biggest and wickedest; they fought at times among themselves for the headship but no weaker lad dared dispute their sinister sway. It would have been very fine of him had he arisen, like Tom Brown or Tom Playfair or any other of the bluff and hearty Toms of story, and proceeded to lay the bullies low with well-directed punches. But he didn't do it; it wasn't his way, as it isn't the way of most lads. But Little Amby enforced immunity from the constant insult and injury which makes unhappy the lives of many weakly youngsters. His way was less noble.

He was not of the dreamy sort; he was a realist;—he didn't care for books at any time during his life—I may say here that I am telling the story of one of New York's

great men. He didn't care for the substitutes for books which the boys of that time devoured so avidly—the Nickel Libraries. Little Amby felt no urge to escape from the steaming pavements, and the din of iron-rimmed wheels on Belgian blocks, and the scents of slaughter houses and gas houses and fat-rendering establishments. Here was his world.

He did fairly well at school, the public school on Lafayette Street. He was good at arithmetic, which is a hard-headed science with no nonsense about it, but he saw no use in grammar or in reading or composition. He liked geography. He liked elocution—that bugbear of small minds; he was not good at it, not having the voice or presence for it, but he liked it. He had poise and confidence and it pleased him to get up there on the teacher's platform and strut about and grin at the ashen-faced Ikey and the glowering Mike whose turns at standing in the public eye were coming.

The common notion that Little Amby was a brilliant scholar derives from this fondness for elocution; when the school gave public entertainments to show the progress of the pupils in learning, Little Amby was always ready and willing to get up and recite, having plenty of cheek and no over-awing respect for his elders. Other parents believed that children should be seen and not heard and thumped their youngsters into acceptance of this excellent doctrine; the youngsters, in the presence of so many of the older and wiser, could not breathe slaughter convincingly with Spartacus, or defy death and taxes with Patrick Henry. But Mrs. Hinkle was a placid and lazy-minded woman, with much indifference to the things that are worth while, and she had not taken proper advantage of her control of food and shelter to force Little Amby to swallow a ready-made stock of opinions. She fed and sheltered him, and let him observe the world for himself. Her complainant attitude was wrong, of course—it is the prime duty of a parent to pat and thump his children into his own image and likeness—but it resulted in Little Amby not being choked by a sense of his own unworthiness when he was asked to outface a crowd. But he was not a brilliant scholar; no, never. He was showy, and shrewd, and impudent and plausible.

When he was twelve years old he graduated from the public school. He graduated

somewhere in the ruck but he made the valedictory address just the same. The scholar of the class, to whom the honor rightfully belonged, had suffered agonies of shyness at the prospect and had tried to poison himself by gulping a table-spoonful of salt and was consequently in eruption. His subject was "National Conscience." He spoke upon this rather hazy matter with perfect assurance, mumbling and telescoping the hard words and coming out boldly with key phrases such as "Notwithstanding all this," and "But, on the other hand!" When he had done, with a stamp and a piping shout, the audience roared and the boy orators behind him grew even more stary-eyed.

Little Amby was twelve and the legal working age in New York City was fourteen and he foresaw difficulty in obtaining employment. He decided to go into business for himself; he wanted to make money and three dollars per week was a fair boy's wage in those days, even for boys with "working papers." The mechanical trades paid nothing to their apprentices.

His chance presented itself a week later. He was sitting behind his mother's counter mashing horse-radish when "Blinky" Willets came staggering from the saloon.

This Blinky Willets was one of the nabobs of the neighborhood. He had been an excavator's laborer and was nearly blind from the effects of a powder explosion. He made it his business to appear entirely blind and his blue-mottled face and dulled eyes were quite convincing. He wore on his chest during business hours a placard which said "I Am Blind." He had a newspaper stand on Grand Street at a transfer point of the surface lines and the appeal of his appearance got him all the trade without his even having to hand out papers or make change. His stand brought him in forty dollars per week, in days when dollars were real money. He spent his takings in drinking and in gambling and in riotous self-indulgence; he would throw a half dollar on the bar like nothing and order liquor for everybody in the house; and he ate a twenty-five-cent Regular Dinner three times each day. This extravagant fellow, with great face of red and blue, came staggering from the saloon, and lurched up against the counter, and reached for the mustard and the hamburgers.

He ate eleven hamburgers, slowly and

casually, making no parade of his spending. Some men, eating hamburgers, would turn their backs to the counter and shout and wave jovially to friends for their notice; but not so Blinky Willetts; his name as a spender was made. He put a hamburger in his mouth whole, while his left hand was on a second, and his eyes on a third, and in his right hand the mustard pot was poised. He ate all the hamburgers on the platter; a Wall Street millionaire could not have eaten more.

"I have come to say good-by, Mrs. Hinkle," he growled throatily after foraging purblindly about the counter.

"You ain't going away, are you?"

"Yes, I'm going away. My sister died out in Milwaukee."

"Oh, ain't that a shame!"

"Yes. And she left me money."

"Oh, ain't that grand!"

"Yes."

"What's going to happen to your stand, Blinky?" asked Little Amby alertly.

Blinky Willetts shrugged his shoulders and puffed to indicate that forty dollars per week could no longer cut a figure in his budget.

"I'll give you five dollars a week for it," offered Little Amby.

"A rich man like you ain't got to make a hard bargain, Blinky," said Mrs. Hinkle.

"I tell you what," said Blinky Willetts, searching his pockets. "It's yours for ten dollars down."

"Done!" accepted Mrs. Hinkle.

"If he's big enough to keep it, that is," said the retiring news dealer, taking the money.

CHAPTER II.

Little Amby lay awake that night for excitement. He knew, as did all the neighborhood, the value of the stand to its former owner. He was out at daybreak to buy his papers from the wagons and spread them for sale. He made seven dollars that first day. A large and loutish newsboy stood on the gutter edge all day and tried to capture the business; but the customers hurried along their wonted way to the stand.

"Where's the blind man?" they asked.

"He isn't here any more," explained Little Amby. "I'm his little boy. My eyes ain't what they were neither, mister."

"He's a liar!" yelled the large lout. "Paper, mister?"

The large lout was waiting for him the following morning. He stalked up to Little Amby, making great play with his shoulders, and pushed him.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Little Amby.

"Tha's all right," said the lout. "Want to fight?"

"No."

"Then get out of here or I'll bang you one. This stand don't belong to you no more. See?"

"I guess it does!"

"Want to fight, do you?" said the lout, spitting into his fists and commencing to dance.

"No, I don't."

"Then get out of here!"

"No, I won't, neither."

"I guess you want to fight," said the lout. And he rushed at Little Amby and hit him heavily on the nose. Little Amby sat down suddenly on the pavement. His nose was numb but he was not angry. As he glared up at the lout he hated him but he felt no hot urge to do battle. He had never felt more pacific.

"Want some more?" asked the lout eagerly.

"No," mumbled Little Amby.

I don't think that he was a coward. It wasn't his way, to fight—that's all. He was a born lover of orderly process, of logic; he never drove his head against stone walls. He would have made a brilliant checker player or statesman, but a very unpopular martyr, prize fighter or soldier. He knew when he was licked; if he had belonged to the famous Light Brigade the world would have lost a very fine poem, since into the Valley of Death would have ridden Five Hundred and Ninety-nine. But, on the other hand—and notwithstanding all this—he could be grimly resolute when grim resolution was the way to win. He was at no time a person of principle. So now he turned tail on the large lout and declined to be battered, thereby refusing his homage to the principle that a man must always return a blow—a principle which was certainly not formulated by small weaklings, nor formulated in their interest.

His skinny little legs ran off with him to Centre Street and down that thoroughfare to the Criminal Courts Building. He climbed the great stone steps between the Egyptian sphinxes, who were new and shiny

then, and entered into the rotunda. He went directly to the police court, where a magistrate was sitting.

He had been many times in this police court. He was active and very inquisitive and he spent his leisure in peeping and prying about. He wandered through car barns, and peeped into the morgue, and sidled into undertakers' shops, and got into slaughter houses, and crept on his hands and knees under the summer doors of saloons. He dodged through fire lines, stuck his head out from between people's legs to see bloody men being carried to ambulances and ran with the best of them in glad view halloo after fleeing thieves. Spectacles of pain and misfortune were his common excitements and he liked best the police court. He could recognize the prisoners—pale and quenched and lifting piteous eyes to their judge, with nothing left in them of the rage and arrogance with which they had done their deeds—and he knew the lawyers, those familiars of this Holy Office, who sat in a row behind a brass railing before the judge, reading their newspapers nonchalantly and turning to smile and wink at their pale clients to let the clients know that the lawyers were devils of fellows who didn't give a snap of the fingers for the court and its grim decorum. And the judge himself, bored, relaxed; but terrible.

"Six months in the city prison and five hundred dollars fine," droned the judge as Little Amby entered. The little boy saw the prisoner being led away, behind a high and strong network of iron, to an invisible stairs down which he passed with stumbling feet, until his head sank from view and he was all swallowed up.

Little Amby approached the complaint desk. At the desk, sidewise to the public, sat a gray-haired clerk with red-veined cheek and smartly curled gray mustache writing in a large leather-covered book. He wrote very slowly, pressing leisurely on the down strokes and putting out his pen again to the inkwell ever so slowly.

"Please, mister," whispered Little Amby.

The official went on writing, slowly. After Little Amby was sure that he had not heard, he spoke.

"Well?"

"I want a warrant, mister."

The official turned his head, slowly and evenly, as though his dignity sat on his head like a brimming pail of water. He suc-

ceeded in getting it quite around without spilling any of it and then he asked Little Amby for the particulars. When the lad had told him of the affair at the news stand he turned again to his desk.

"Don't bother me, boy," he said, taking up his pen again.

Little Amby waited.

"Go along, now!" said the official.

Magistrate Hellwell looked around. He was bored and was ready for some comic relief. His eyes fell on Little Amby. He was a big-bellied and big-jowled man with popping eyes and a thinning pompadour. He was a politician and ran his court as a public spectacle. He liked to exchange repartee with attorneys and witnesses, knowing that the spectators would laugh loudly at his every sally and that he could always bring down his gavel with a bang and a roar and mete out a punishment for contempt if the game went too obviously against him.

"Come over here, boy!" he grumbled. "What's the matter with your nose?"

"A boy hit me, y'r honor," explained Little Amby confidently. "I want a warrant for him, for breaking the peace."

"For breaking your nose, you mean," said the magistrate, smiling and raising his eyes to the spectators.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the spectators, beaming back at the genial magistrate.

"Why didn't you hit him back?" asked Hellwell.

"He was twice as big as me," said Little Amby, astonished at the question. "And, besides, it's against the law."

"You mean it might be against your jaw!" shouted Hellwell jovially. He laughed full-face at his convulsed audience this time; his retort had been very neat. He would remember this one, to repeat it to his wife; this time, certainly, she would do something more than call him a big fool.

"When *Ow* was a boy, young fellow," said the magistrate, sobering and frowning, "I didn't use to go and ask for a warrant when another kid bloodied my nose. That wasn't my way, young fellow! I soaked him back again, that's what I did, when *Ow* was a boy. That's the American way of doing business, young fellow, and that's the kind of boys grows up into the kind of men that we want in this country. Now, you go right out and soak that boy back again—you hear? Boys will be boys."

"Yes, sir," said Little Amby dazedly.

"What's the country coming to," thundered the magistrate, knitting his black brows and glaring until the spectators shook in their seats, "when a little child like this here comes running for a warrant when another youth has soaked him on the nose! God helps them that helps themselves, young fellow. The men that are making this country the greatest country on God's green footstool weren't cry babies like you are, young fellow, and you can bet your bottom dollar on it. You hear? There's an old saying and a true one, young fellow, 'Self Help Smiles.' Self Help Smiles, young fellow."

"Yes, sir," said Little Amby, nodding rapidly. "Self Help Smiles!"

"And don't you forget it," said the magistrate, relaxing his face and permitting himself to smile also, which set the benches off again.

Little Amby's head was in a ferment as he trudged homeward. He was not an ordinary lad. He was mature-minded; you can't put an old head on young shoulders, but Nature sometimes does. He had appealed for justice and it had been denied him; he had followed confidently the way of law and order and had been told to step aside. His little face was white with cold rage and his black eyes burned in his head. He had the unbalanced feelings of a child; and the emotions of childhood are beyond compare more intense than those of later years. He did not give over for an instant his intention to retake his own and to revenge himself on the large lout; his mind was clinched on that.

He sat on a tenement stoop and fastened his eyes on his enemy, who was doing a brisk trade at the stand. There he was—a great, lumbering, insensitive fellow who was nearly a foot taller than Little Amby and outweighed him by half as much again. Little Amby watched him and considered methods of approach and of attack and of retreat.

Then he arose and walked over to Tony Pandolpho's Ice, Coal and Wood Cellar, and descended into it, and found Tony's keen docker's ax on the woodpile. He put the ax on his shoulder and plodded up the steps again. The ax helve was nearly as long as he and the weight of the single-edged blade made him bend forward to balance it. He crossed Grand Street, increasing his speed to a run as he neared the news stand and

pulling at the helve to start it into its swing. He succeeded in throwing it forward and he dropped the heavy blade on the head of the large lout; the lout fell promptly to the pavement and perceiving the ax beside him shouted loudly and sincerely that he was killed.

That is really all there is to the story that Little Amby chopped an enemy to pieces once on Grand Street; he never denied having done so, knowing that the story was an asset and made his enemies think twice. And just now, as he looked down and saw blood on the large lout's head and listened to his howls, he thought that he had killed him and was sick with horror.

An hour later Magistrate Hellwell sat in his court. At his right hand on the dais sat a large man with the face of a bishop; he had a big and glossy and well-molded face, with fully opened and untroubled eyes; in the depths of his eyes was a benevolent cynicism such as is enforced on a man who loves his fellow men but knows that they are sinners all. He was Steve Hilley, the local political leader.

"He hit *him* with an ax!" said the policeman, indicating Little Amby and the lout, whose head was bound up. "He punched *him* in the nose, and he hit *him* with an ax. Hit him on the head, he did."

"And served him good and right for hitting a kid half his size," breathed Steve Hilley. He had come on another matter but was willing to give the magistrate the benefit of his opinion. He knew Little Amby by sight.

"What's your name?" demanded the magistrate of the lout.

"Hooper."

"Where do you live?"

"Nowheres. Just now I——"

"How old are you?"

"Sixteen. All that I says to this boy was——"

"What's your religion?"

"Ain't got none. I was minding my own business, judge, when this boy hauled off and——"

"Committed to the Waifs' Haven until twenty, or during bad behavior," said the magistrate. "Make out the commitment papers, Mr. Canton. Take him away, officer! Well, was there anything else?"

"He hit *him* with an ax," repeated the officer.

The magistrate whispered with Steve Hil-

ley. The policeman watched this colloquy with a wary eye.

"Who's making the complaint?" asked the magistrate.

"The boy that got hit."

"I won't take a complaint from him, officer. In the first place, he was committing the crime of vagrancy when he was hit, wasn't he? The criminal intent to commit vagrancy will be presumed to carry over and supply criminal intent to all other acts done while committing vagrancy—see? Just like a burglar breaking into a house and killing the proprietor—he's guilty of first-degree murder and it don't make any difference if he meant to kill or not. So, in the eye of the lore, officer, this vagrant Hooper intended to hit himself with that ax. In the second place he was an accessory before the fact, and a principal in the second degree, and *particeps criminis*, officer, because he aided and abetted this poor boy to hit him with the ax by hanging out on that street corner where he had no right to be!"

"I see, y'r honor," said the officer, nodding vigorously. He went off with furrowed brow, trying to fasten in his memory these principles of law.

"Step in here, young fellow," said an attendant to Little Amby, opening a gate in the inner railing. "The judge wants to see you. Wait in there."

Little Amby entered the judge's private room and sat on the edge of a black leather sofa. The judge entered after an hour.

"Soaked him good, Hilley, didn't you?" he said with a friendly smile.

"Hinkle is my name, sir," said Little Amby. "Not Hilley."

"That's funny," said the magistrate. "I thought the name was Hilley. Well, that makes no difference. We're all equal before the lore, young man. You seem to be a bright little fellow, with a mind of your own. Are you working?"

"No, sir."

"How would you like to be a lawyer?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I'm looking for a young man to learn the law business in my office," said the magistrate. "Can you read and write?"

"I graduated from the public school last week."

"You did, hey? How old are you?"

"I'm twelve."

"That's bad," said the magistrate con-

sideringly. "You'd ought to be fourteen to work, according to the lore of the State of New York. Oh, well, I guess we can fix that up. We can look into the mind of the legislature."

"Yes, sir."

"When a lore don't look right," said the magistrate, lighting a cigar and leaning back with his hands behind his head, "there must be some mistake about it. And then we look into the mind of the legislature to see if the lore says what they meant—see? Now, what was in the mind of the legislature when they passed that lore saying that a boy got to be fourteen to work? They wanted to see that a boy got a good education, that's what! But you got a good education and therefore the lore wasn't meant for you—see? Now we come to the principle that 'the lore presumes done what ought to be done.' Well, you ought to be fourteen by rights, so the lore will presume you are fourteen. I'll get you your working papers and you can tell people after this that you're fourteen. That will be what we call a legal fiction—see?"

"Yes, sir!" said Little Amby enchantedly.

"Go out this way," said the magistrate.

"Come around on Monday morning at eight. The pay is two dollars per week and don't put red ink in the black inkwell or we'll have your life."

CHAPTER III.

"Young man," said Hellwell to Little Amby on Monday morning, "what is the first qualification of a good lawyer?"

"To know the law," said Little Amby.

"Well, yes," said the magistrate, swallowing. "To know the lore. But what's the next, young man—the very next?"

"To get business," suggested Little Amby, after thought.

"Well—yes!" said the magistrate again.

"A lawyer without business ain't worth discussing. The things you mention, young man, are what we call *res inter alios*, which means things that everybody knows without saying, except a born fool. But supposing that a lawyer knows the lore, and gets the business—what's the very next qualification he got to have? And I want you to be right this time, understand me?"

Little Amby studied the magistrate's face earnestly.

"It begins with a haitch!" hinted Hellwell. "'O' is the next letter in it."

He opened his mouth wide and huffed and puffed mutely, nodding his head encouragingly.

"Oh!" cried Little Amby relievedly. "Hollering! When he knows the law, and got the business, then he got to holler!"

"The word is honesty, young man," said the magistrate, restraining his feelings. "Honesty is what I always call the first qualification of a good lawyer. I been saying so for the last thirty years and I say so yet. Honesty! You hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"It ain't no use blaming a boy like you for making mistakes," said Hellwell. "You are not got the legal mind. When you get to be a lawyer, young man, you will get the legal mind, and then you will not take ten minutes to get the right answer to such a simple question pulled out of you, but you will spit it out like a shot. The legal mind, young man, means thinking like a lawyer. I will keep an eye on you, young man, to see how your legal mind is coming along and I will fire you so quick your head will swim if I see you loafing or playing and don't you forget it. Now, what's the two things you got to remember?"

"Honesty," said Little Amby, "and that you got your eye on me."

"Right," nodded Hellwell. "Remember those two, and you and me won't ever have a run-in. Those two are *Alpha* and *Omega*, meaning in the Latin language, A B C. Did you study Latin in school, young man?"

"No, sir."

"You'll pick it up," said Hellwell satisfiedly. "Neither did I study it, but I picked it up fast enough. A lawyer should be able to speak Latin. To get to understand it is harder, but that's all right since every lawyer says his own and don't have to answer questions in it. Juries like a little Latin once in a way, as it makes them feel they are learning something and not just wasting their time away from business; and it gives the judge something to chew on when he is getting too bossy and thinking that he knows all about the case. However, this is all over your head, young man, being that you have not got the legal mind yet. Go outside now and see Mr. Cronkhite."

Mr. Cronkhite was a gray little starveling of a man, short-sighted and bent, and as timorous and unremitting in his poring over his legal papers as a rabbit nipping lettuce. He had been a lawyer—one of that army of

third-rate lawyers who vegetate in little dens and make less the year round than does a second-rate grocery clerk. He had neither of the two first requisites accepted by Hellwell; he had neither a penetrating faculty for the law, nor a knack for getting business; the joinder of these qualifications is invincible but either of them may win by itself. He had been married and his wife had starved with him until she became tuberculous; she had died while he was in the penitentiary, to which he had been sent for converting a client's money to his own use. He was fifty-four now, with the world before him, and as free and unburdened as a boy of twenty. But he seemed to lack fire and ambition and just went nipping away. Hellwell paid him sixteen dollars per week.

The firm's name was Hope & Hellwell. Hope was a legal fiction, probably invented by Hellwell after looking into the mind of the legislature which had forbidden judges to practice; the name always appeared in the *Law Journal* as Hope & H. Mr. Cronkhite, in his quality of clerk, represented the firm in court for all purposes except the actual trial of cases; he could not try cases, being disbarred. But trial work comprises a very small fraction of any law firm's activities; even of litigated issues—themselves only part of the work—not more than one in eight or ten is ever brought to trial. Mr. Cronkhite was overburdened with work; he was steady, like an old horse, but he had his gait beyond which he could not be whipped. Hellwell had given him a succession of junior clerks, ending in Little Amby.

The firm was housed in a store on Lafayette Street, which store Hellwell had partitioned into offices. With the firm in the store, and with their names also on the front window, were a city marshal, a furniture mover, a real-estate man and a locksmith. This juxtaposition of trades was of chance—if there is such a thing—but it had value; if a tenant told the realtor to go and whistle for his rent, he had need of a lawyer, a city marshal, a furniture mover and perhaps a locksmith.

"Mm-mph!" sniffed Mr. Cronkhite, looking up from his nipping to survey Little Amby. He wore spectacles rimmed with gray iron and an iron-gray mustache the center of which was colored brown. He was never seen to smoke; perhaps the parti-coloring of his mustache, with its suggestion

of overindulgence in strong cigars, was just his little vanity.

"Yes, sir," said Little Amby.

"Yes—*what?*"

"Yes, sir."

"Mm-mp!" sniffed Mr. Cronkhite again distrustfully. "Where's the nearest fire house, boy?"

"On Canal Street, sir. Next to the button factory."

"Is there a hospital around here?"

"Yes, sir. On Hudson Street."

"What door do the ambulances go in?"

"They don't go in a door, sir. They go in a court."

"Where's the precinct station house?"

"There isn't any near here—nearer than Mercer Street; police headquarters on Centre Street takes in around here, sir."

"Humph," grunted Mr. Cronkhite, nodding his head convincingly. "He runs to fires. He runs after ambulances. He spends his time tagging after policemen and gaping at men that are being brought to the station house. Nice boy to give me for a clerk. Nice boy! Here, take this reply and give it to the pleadings clerk down at the county courthouse, and be back here in fifteen minutes by that clock."

"Yes, sir. Where is the county courthouse?"

"What!" cried Mr. Cronkhite, turning with widened eyes on his assistant.

Little Amby hurried out with the pleading and asked his way of a policeman.

All this was only Mr. Cronkhite's little bluff. If Little Amby—runty little lad in knickerbockers—had barked back at him, he would have pulled in his horns. The business of practicing law in a pettifogging way, especially in a large city, is mostly a matter of bluffing and terrorizing. He meant no harm by it; he would have been a mildly spoken and sweet-tempered little man if he could have afforded to please himself.

Mr. Cronkhite was preparing the testimony of witnesses in a pending accident case when Little Amby returned from the county courthouse. Mr. Cronkhite was sitting at a table, with the two witnesses before him. Little Amby seated himself on the edge of a chair in a corner.

"Your name is Mallory, isn't it?" barked Mr. Cronkhite.

"Yes, y'r honor," whispered the laborer who was the plaintiff in the case.

"Speak up, Mallory," exhorted Mr. Cronkhite, making a note. "Don't talk like a liar. You were crossing Ninth Avenue at Sixteenth Street when you were hit by the car. Why were you walking in the street?"

"I come out of the saloon," said the plaintiff. "And——"

"Will you *swear*," interrupted Mr. Cronkhite, "that it was exactly sixteen minutes after two on the afternoon of September 14th when you came out of that saloon?"

"Why, no, y'r honor," protested the laborer. "I couldn't say just when it was, like that!"

"Then don't say anything about the saloon," said Mr. Cronkhite austerely. "It was exactly sixteen minutes after two when you were hit by the car, wasn't it? You swore to that; but we don't want you to swear to anything you're not dead sure of. So don't say anything about the saloon. Now, what part of the avenue were you crossing?"

"Right in the middle. A friend of mine was going by on top of a truck, and he hollered to me, and I was waving at him when all of a sudden——"

"You were on the cross walk," said Mr. Cronkhite, writing rapidly. "It's against the city ordinance to cross an avenue in the middle. You started from the corner and it stands to reason you crossed the shortest way. Did the car driver sound his bell?"

"I don't know."

"Then you better swear he didn't, as you can't swear to anything you're not absolutely sure of. Did you look up and down the street carefully before starting across?"

"Well, you see, a friend of mine was going by on top of a truck and I was waving to him, and——"

"Are you a fool?"

"No, I ain't no fool!"

"Then you looked up and down the avenue. Nobody but a fool would walk across the avenue without looking up and down. You looked up and down the avenue, and saw nothing approaching, and then you started across and the next thing you knew you were knocked down. Did you see our doctor, as I told you?"

"Yes."

"All right. He'll be in court to-morrow morning. Be there at nine o'clock sharp. This is your eyewitness here, isn't it? Well,

Heffernan, what do you know about this case?"

"I was driving my truck," said Heffernan, frowning with the effort of thinking. "And I see my friend Mallory here coming out of the saloon. And seeing that he is under the influence and being that he is a decent man, I hollered to him would I give him a lift, and——"

"No, no, no!" cried Mr. Cronkhite, with a peevish wave of the hand. "You can't swear to such stuff. We want only *facts*! You can't swear he was coming out of the saloon, since you didn't see him until he was on the sidewalk, and it's merely your opinion that he was under the influence of liquor. The fact is that you saw Mallory on the sidewalk, and you recognized him, and watched him for a few moments, and then you saw him hit by the street car. Now, Heffernan, how fast was that car going?"

"Well, it was not going so fast."

"Was it going slow?"

"Well, it was not going so slow."

"How fast *was* it going?"

"It was going about as fast as a wagon!"

"How fast does a wagon go?"

"Well, it goes about as fast as a horse car. Faith, them car drivers go lickety-split and think they own the street and try to crowd everybody else off, and after they've pestered the life out of you with their bell, and you pull aside, they whip up their horses and try for your axle with the step of their platform. Don't tell me about car drivers!"

"The driver of the car," said Mr. Cronkhite, writing, "whipped up his horses and drove lickety-split. Very good, Heffernan. Wait out in front with Mallory. Yes, out that door. Good day."

He turned to Little Amby. "Here, boy! Write your name on that pad."

He grunted, masking his secret approval as he looked at the clerkly signature.

"It's a wonder we haven't got to teach you to write. Make two copies of this testimony. One copy is to go to the men sitting outside and the other to our Mr. O'Malley, who is to try the case. Tell those two men outside that they're to learn their stories by heart and that they're to say everything that's on that paper and nothing else. And then——"

Mr. Cronkhite thrust at Little Amby a great volume entitled "Clerks' and Convey-

ancers' Assistant." "And then draw this will! Write it out on parchment paper like this—you'll find the paper in the top drawer of that cabinet—and leave out the words in red ink. I'll fill them in later. All you got to do is copy this form here word for word, except that you fill in the blanks with the information on this slip of paper. And then"—Mr. Cronkhite slapped a copy of the *Law Journal* on top of the big volume—"you'll find in there a pageful of numbers headed 'October Call Calendar.' And here's the numbers of the cases we have pending in the supreme court; see if any of these numbers are in the October Call; draw a circle around any you find. And then—well, what's the matter, boy?"

"I'm getting a little mixed up, sir," said Little Amby tremulously.

"Mixed up!" exclaimed Mr. Cronkhite, glaring at him. "What in Heaven's name is there to be mixed up about? Go away, boy, go away. Take your work into the next room. And be done in one hour—in one hour by that clock, or——"

He shook his head satisfiedly, to indicate that he would know how to select among his thunderbolts if Little Amby overstayed his allotted hour. Little Amby hurried into the adjoining room and drove headlong into his first legal work. His feverish haste caused a roaring in his ears, such as had come to him when Mike Sperduti had pushed him from the dock into deep water to teach him to swim.

Mr. O'Malley came in at half past four. He was the admitted clerk who did the actual trial work for the firm, throwing the balls which Mr. Cronkhite made. He was a thick-necked young man with a red and obstinate eye and a voice hoarsened by much shouting. He went to his desk, upon which Little Amby had piled, by Mr. Cronkhite's order, "Heffelfinger on Torts," "Jencks on Contributory Negligence," "Hornblower on Damages," and seven volumes of "New York Reports." Mr. O'Malley mentioned Mr. Cronkhite in a grumbling undertone, and threw the books to the floor and kicked them away. He sat down heavily and pulled a folded copy of the *Pink Gazette* from his hip pocket and threw it onto the desk, where it unfolded and displayed a picture of young John L. Sullivan. He yawned, tilted in his chair, stared meditatively before him.

"Bring me," he murmured at length, "bring me Limburger on——"

"On Evidence, sir?" suggested Little Amby, eager to please.

"On rye bread!" said Mr. O'Malley decisively. "Two sandwiches. And a bottle of dark beer. Here—catch! Look spry, now, sonny!"

CHAPTER IV.

Little Amby spent the next seven years in the office of Magistrate Hellwell. Beyond question these were formative years; their story would be full of instruction to us—the story of the years during which was formed and hardened the character of the extraordinary little rascal who became the undisputed leader of New York's criminal bar. But he does not seem to have impressed himself vividly on the memories of his surviving associates of those days; at any rate, they shrug their shoulders and stare, when questioned.

"I always had an intuition that he would come to a bad end," said the learned and ponderous Mr. Justice O'Malley of the city court. "He never cared for study and trusted to trickiness and loud talking to win his cases. Yes, he slighted that wide and deep reading of the substantive law which is the only proper preparation for advocacy."

This criticism seemed to be directed more to Little Amby's professional habits in his later years; but the justice had nodded and wheeled again to his table, upon which were piled treatises on the substantive law and on which some one—his attendant, possibly—had had the temerity to leave a copy of the current issue of the *Pink Gazette*.

The litigated part of Hope & H.'s business was transacted mostly in police and municipal courts and had to do with such matters as actions by tailors or grocers for goods sold and delivered, actions on a *quantum meruit* by jobbing plumbers for work, labor and service in clearing a kitchen sink, suits in replevin to recover a trunk from a boarding-house keeper, summary proceedings to eject nonpaying tenants, defending saloon keepers who had neither obeyed the excise law nor paid for the privilege of violating it, defending men who had peddled vegetables without a license or who had jostled passengers on the street cars, defending ladies for breaking the tenement house law—all the petty maladjustments of metropolitan society. When the firm appeared in the superior courts it was ordi-

narily in connection with domestic relations or negligence—meaning divorce cases or accident cases. They were always on the lookout for accident cases, which are the rich nuggets of the law business. The big firms have all the good contract and corporation business, for they have as their clients all the big business men, but claims for damages for accidents and personal injuries are distributed more equitably and the bulk of them accrue to poor people.

Hope & H. took accident cases on a fifty-fifty basis. If a schoolboy was run over by a truck, if a tired factory girl was seized by the hair and scalped by her machine, if a painter's scaffold broke and he fell to the hard street, Hope & H. filed suit for damages and if they won they gave half of the recovery to the victim or his widow. If they won: the arrangement was not so unfair as it seemed; those were bad old days and it was hard for the craftiest lawyer to win an accident case, though very much worth his while. Nowadays we have workmen's compensation and employers' liability, but in those days the crippled schoolboy would get nothing unless he could show that the driver of the wagon was going about his master's business at the moment of the accident, the factory girl would not get the price of a wig if the chance of being scalped by her machine was an ordinary risk of her employment, and the contractor went scot-free if he could show that the scaffold which had let the painter down had been rigged by a fellow employee of the decedent. And no matter how reckless and careless had been the driver of the wagon, and the keeper of the sweatshop, and the painter's employer, the injured parties were entitled to no recompense if they themselves had been guilty of negligence which had contributed in any way to bring the accident about.

Little Amby grew up to regard the noble profession to which he was apprenticed as a business of mere privateering; a lawyer's certificate came to mean to him nothing more than letters of marque empowering the holder to prey upon the commerce of the city. He learned how to throw a business man into bankruptcy, so as to make rich pickings; and how to throw a business man into bankruptcy so that he might defraud his creditors. He learned that all laymen are afraid of courts and will gladly pay something in settlement if sued on whatever flimsy pretext. He observed that

very few people are punished for perjury, although the opposing witnesses in law suits swear to opposing stories and must ordinarily know the truth.

The petty nature of Hope & H.'s practice precluded any exhaustive preparation of cases or any extensive reading of the law; the same legal principles are involved in an action for the price of a box of oranges sold and delivered as in an action for the price of a train load, but patently a lawyer cannot spend as much time profitably upon the one case as upon the other. It thus came about, in Hope & H.'s office, that no time was lost in ransacking encyclopedias and textbooks and reports for statements of law fitting the facts in the case in which the firm was retained; they found it much simpler and easier to alter the facts to fit the law. For example, in the case of *Mallory versus New York Railways*—touched on in the preceding chapter—it was easier and simpler to have Mallory testify that he looked up and down the avenue before crossing than it would have been to show by authority and precedent that his carelessness was not such contributory negligence as must defeat his claim. Little Amby did very little reading in the law; he picked up some knowledge of its elementary principles much as Hellwell picked up his Latin; such study as he did was concerned with learning procedure.

Outside of his hours at the office he lived the life of a child of the streets. Smartly dressed in a seven-dollar suit, white-handed, with an American Gentleman cigarette pasted to his lower lip, he frequented pool parlors, lunch rooms, penny arcades and small crap games. He never entered a church, a library or a night school, not even by accident. He became a brilliant pool player and could run ten or twelve balls, with a quarter at stake, on almost any kind of a break; he could talk their own language to dice. He was quite an accomplished young man about town when he graduated to the bars of saloons and the chairs of barber shops and the shining floors of dance halls. His way of life was not vicious; no provision was made in his neighborhood for the sane rearing of children and they were obliged to adapt to their own use what they could of the amusements of adults; among his companions were boys who are clergymen, physicians, swindlers, business men and men of no account for good or evil.

His ancestry had been city dwelling for many generations; he would probably have sickened and died in the country. He was a delicately made little fellow, whom a day of bodily labor would have nearly killed; and yet he was surprisingly tough in his way and could sit up all night at a poker game and then go home and wash his face and change his collar and turn up at the office as fresh as paint. At the age of eighteen he had risen to his full height of five feet two, and weighed well over a hundred pounds. He was a small-boned man, dapper, always loudly and smartly dressed, loving jewelry and wearing imitation diamonds! There was something birdlike about his face, with its pointed jaw and its large and quick-glancing black eyes.

The first case in which Little Amby figures prominently is that of *Pruitt vs. Pruitt*, in divorce. He was then nineteen—twenty-one, according to Hellwell's reading of the mind of the legislature—and he is credited with the service of the complaint on the defendant. Pruitt claimed that he was never served and went to the appellate division in a legal battle to have the service set aside, but he was finally defeated. The facts in the matter are on record; any attorney examining this record nowadays and bearing in mind the after history of Little Amby must conclude that the august appellate division was deceived and that Pruitt was telling the truth. The case is rather typical of the methods of Little Amby and it is worth our while to consider.

"Here's the complaint," grumbled Hellwell, throwing the document across the desk. "That blamed process server that was supposed to be such a wonder has given it up. He says it's no use trying to serve Pruitt; that he's too darned foxy. When *Ow* was a young fellow a hard service was just my pie, but these process servers nowadays are too dumb to live. *Ow* would have served this Pruitt in jig time! Take a hold of it you, will you?"

"Where is Pruitt?" asked Little Amby, taking up the complaint.

"Over in Jersey. Y'understand, he's got to be handed that complaint here in New York and the trouble is to get him across the river. The process server says he's worn out trying to coax Pruitt down to the ferry. He wanted to send a couple of fellows over there and kidnap Pruitt and run him over here, but I wouldn't stand for those sort

of tactics. The court would set the service aside, as sure as gunshot, being that they will not allow service by force or trickery."

"How about swearing out a warrant for him on some charge or other and get him arrested and brought over here and then serve him?"

"No use," said Hellwell. "He can't be served while he's under arrest. We got to catch him some time when he is in New York, but the trouble is he is never in New York."

"What kind of a man is Pruitt?"

"He's a bad actor. He's one of the Pruitt family of Hoboken—millionaires from away back. He's paying alimony already to three ex-wives, and he doesn't want to pay any more, so he's avoiding service in this case. He'll probably take a fancy to some other girl in a few months and then he'll be willing to come in and talk business with us, but it'd be better business if we could serve him now. But he's a fly gent and it don't pay to get too gay with him; he put a bullet through a private detective that the process server hired to shadow him. That's his tintype there with the complaint."

"What's it worth to serve him?" asked Little Amby, studying the tintype.

"Ow wouldn't kick on expenses, if you serve him," said Hellwell. "If you serve him, understand? We'd get it all back. He should be good for a thousand-dollar counsel fee and two hundred per week separation allowance if we can once get him into court. But he musn't be brought here by trickery or force, understand me!"

"I'll see," said Little Amby. And he left the office and sought out the process server and talked to him about Mr. Pruitt of Hoboken.

CHAPTER V.

Two days later Little Amby crossed on the ferry to Hoboken and traveled over to Stevens Boulevard, which was then the main thoroughfare of the exclusive residential section. He came to the Pruitt place, which was a large residence of field stone set in a twelve-acre estate. The estate was surrounded by a stone wall, ten feet in height and topped with sharp iron spikes set close. He came to the entrance to the estate and peered through the high gates of wrought iron; a blue-stoned driveway beneath old linden trees led from the gate to the marquee before the house doors. Lights were bright-

ening in the house; it was six o'clock of a November evening.

Little Amby tugged at the gate, but could not shake it with his small strength. Then he saw a rope hanging down, and he yanked it and jangled an iron bell.

"Who's there?" called a man inside, throwing open the door to a small stone lodge beside the wall. "Get back!"

The yelp and growl of a dog followed the thudding blow which accompanied the last words.

"Gentleman to see Mr. Pruitt!" cried Little Amby.

The serving man inside came to the gates and lifted a lantern to scan the visitor. Two huge black hounds which he held in leash erected themselves against the gates and strained with bared fangs at Little Amby.

"What do you want to see him about?" growled the gatekeeper.

"Give him this card," said Little Amby, passing a business card of Hope & Hellwell through the gate. "Tell him not to jump to conclusions but to give me a chance to talk to him. It's about the suit for divorce his wife is bringing."

The gatekeeper stooped and unleashed the dogs and then turned and hobbled toward the house. With eager snarls the big brutes leaped at the gates; Little Amby's scalp moved involuntarily and lifted his smart little derby; with a hasty glance he measured the distance to the nearest lamp-post.

"He'll see you," said the gatekeeper, returning. He was an elderly man but he sprang very nimbly to right and to left, kicking his dogs to secure their attention. He snapped the leashes back on their spiked collars and set to dragging them toward his lodge. He threw the bight of the leash over an iron hook set in the wall and then unlocked the gates. After some parley concerning the dogs Little Amby sidled inside the grounds; the gatekeeper locked the gates again and went key in hand to his lodge. He watched the visitor through a side window.

A footman showed Little Amby into the presence of the master of the house. Mr. Pruitt sat in a wing chair before an open fire in the library; the fire light showed an open newspaper on the lap of his dressing gown; a bottle of whisky and two glasses were on a stand at his elbow.

"I'll turn up the light, if you don't mind," said Little Amby.

"What for?" growled the tenant of the wing chair.

"I can't talk in the dark," said Little Amby. "What I have to say, Mr. Pruitt, is for you alone, and I won't talk in the dark."

There was no answer and Little Amby turned high a light in the brass chandelier.

He recognized Mr. Pruitt, although the gentleman had apparently not washed or shaved in several days. His face was black with a stubble of beard, almost losing to view the trailing black mustaches of the tintype. Beside the chair leaned the cane with which he assisted his lame leg. His hair was uncombed, his big toes stuck out of the woolen socks which rested on the fender and his dressing gown was torn and dirty.

"Here's the complaint in divorce," said Little Amby, sitting down on a tabouret and tendering the document to Mr. Pruitt.

The latter struck it from his hand with an oath and leaned forward in a rage.

"Are you serving that on me?" he cried, fumbling behind him for a bell which stood beside the bottle of whisky.

"No, no," said Little Amby tremulously, and shrinking away. "I'm not serving it on you, Mr. Pruitt! I can't serve it on you, because this is New Jersey and it can only be served on you in New York! Keep cool, Mr. Pruitt. I just want you to look at it before I tell you my business."

"I don't care what's in it!" growled Mr. Pruitt, keeping his eyes on the cowering law clerk but stooping slowly to recover the complaint.

"Sure, you don't," agreed Little Amby.

Mr. Pruitt ran his eyes over the pleading. Then he flung it to the floor again. "All lies!" he shouted.

"Sure, they are," nodded Little Amby placatingly. "Whatever you say, Mr. Pruitt. Only—we can prove them in court, Mr. Pruitt. We can prove those names and dates and you know it. I'm not saying that they're true; I'm only saying that we can prove them. And that means that your wife is bound to get a divorce, sooner or later, Mr. Pruitt."

"Not while I have a dollar! I'll see her burn first!"

"Your feeling about this matter is very proper," said Little Amby, pulling up his smart little trouser leg and clasping his knee. "I respect you for being opposed to divorce, on principle. That's just the way

our office feels about it, too. We hate to see a happy home broken up, a cheery fire-side put out, a husband and wife parted, perhaps forever. Our argument is that what God has joined——"

Mr. Pruitt snatched up his heavy cane. "I'll smash you," he said wickedly.

"However, let that be," said Little Amby, hastily changing his tune. "The point is, how is this divorce to be prevented? Supposing we were to put you in possession of evidence which would prevent your wife from securing a divorce—what would you say to that?"

"I'd pay you for it," said Mr. Pruitt practically.

"It would have to be managed in such a way as to reflect no discredit on the firm of Hope & Hellwell," said Little Amby. "We think an awful lot of our good name, Mr. Pruitt. In fact, it's our stock in trade, as you might say."

"What have you got to do with the firm?"

"My name is Hope," said Little Amby. "I'm the active partner, the judge being busy on the bench."

Mr. Pruitt looked searchingly at him. To the casual glance Little Amby was a boy, but he had a maturity of manner and a steadiness of eye which belied his slight stature and smooth face.

"I'm young yet," said Little Amby modestly. "I'm only twenty-four. But I have ideas in my head. I figure it's worth a thousand dollars to us to get Mrs. Pruitt this divorce. What's it worth to you to prevent her from getting it?"

"Pretty cool, aren't you?" commented Mr. Pruitt. But he was not angered. Little Amby had measured his man. "What's your price?"

"Two thousand dollars would be reasonable," said Little Amby.

"I'll pay it," said Mr. Pruitt with a tightening of the jaws. "Now how are you going to do it?"

"C. O. D.," said Little Amby.

"What do you mean?" inquired Mr. Pruitt truculently.

"I mean that I'll give you the evidence to-night but I want my money so soon as I've told you the story. I'll take a check."

"Don't you trust me?"

"Certainly. You can stop the check in the morning if I don't go through with the work."

"Very well," nodded Mr. Pruitt, watching the little man keenly.

"This complaint," said Little Amby, relaxing, "states sufficient grounds for an absolute divorce under New York law. We are agreed on that and, as one gentleman to another, we will agree that we can prove its allegations of misconduct. I call your attention to this allegation in the complaint that Mrs. Pruitt has not forgiven or condoned your offenses. Under the New York statute a wife is not entitled to a divorce if she forgives her husband his offenses and lives with him again as man and wife. That is, if she knows what her husband has done, and once agrees to kiss and make up, the courts in our State will not let her reopen the matter later."

"But Mrs. Pruitt has not forgiven me my offenses, as you call them!"

"No," agreed Little Amby suavely. "And she probably never will, Mr. Pruitt. She is very indignant and she is determined to break off this marriage. And, speaking as one man of the world to another, Mrs. Pruitt is justified. But suppose that we can prove in court that she forgave you? As a lawyer, Mr. Pruitt, I'm interested only in legal proof and not in mere facts."

"How can you do it?"

"Mrs. Pruitt is sailing for Europe to-morrow morning. We advised her to take this trip, because we feared—speaking candidly—that your detectives would play some dishonorable trick on her. She will return in time for the trial. The *Kronprinzessin Hatalie*, on which she is sailing, leaves the Hamburg-American dock here in Hoboken at six o'clock to-morrow morning. Within the next eleven hours you must make your peace with your wife. She is stopping to-night at a hotel in this city. I suggest that you go there, make your peace with her, agree to forgive and forget. I can arrange this interview between you and Mrs. Pruitt." Little Amby paused to let this sink in.

"You mean you can prove it," said Mr. Pruitt, beginning to smile.

"You are acquiring the legal mind, Mr. Pruitt," bowed Little Amby.

"You don't want me to go to New York?"

"No."

"Wait here," said Mr. Pruitt, rising abruptly. He strode from the room.

Little Amby sat and gazed with narrowed eyes into the fire.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Pruitt returned in half an hour. He was dressed for the street, wearing a brown tweed suit finished at all edges with silk braid of a darker brown and decorated with rows of extra buttons, a brown derby with black ribbon, patent-leather shoes, black-clothed red silk stockings and a red silk Newmarket cravat. Over his arm was a brown paddock overcoat with mink collar. Mr. Pruitt was an elegant dresser, not to say an eccentric one. He had been washed and shaved and combed.

He put his hand under the tails of his ornate jacket and drew out a pearl-handled revolver with a barrel inlaid with silver. He held this pretty thing to Little Amby's sharp nose. "Don't forget that I have this with me," he warned. "And I'm ready to use it!"

"Don't forget to bring your check book too, Mr. Pruitt," said Little Amby, striving to hide his trembling. "And be ready to use that too!"

Mr. Pruitt ordered his coach to the door. He and the little law clerk entered the vehicle. "The Hotel Honduras, on River Street!" directed Little Amby.

The coach, pulled by a handsome pair, rolled through the gates and into the streets of Hoboken. They continued east to River Street and thus to the shabby little hotel near the steamship docks.

"Register as Mr. and Mrs. Pruitt of Hoboken," whispered Little Amby, trotting beside the hurrying Mr. Pruitt into the lobby. About thirty people were in the lobby, principally prospective voyagers on the *Kronprinzessin Hatalie*.

Little Amby signed the register "Ambrose Hinkle, New York."

"I do not care to use my right name," he explained to his companion. "The firm of Hope & Hellwell must not appear in this."

"Here's a telegram to Mrs. Pruitt which I am going to send," he said, exhibiting a form. "I want you to sign this. This is to show that your meeting was a friendly arrangement. I've addressed it to the Cambodia in New York, but she'll never get it, because she's waiting for me right now in the ferryhouse."

"That looks like good judgment," agreed Mr. Pruitt after deep reflection. "It asks her to meet me here. There can't be any-

thing wrong in that. I'll sign it and it will be preserved by the telegraph company, eh?"

"Until we want to use it," nodded Little Amby.

They went up to the room which had been reserved for Mr. and Mrs. Pruitt of Hoboken.

"This is the idea," explained Little Amby. "I'll go down and bring your wife up here, taking care that she does not go near the register. She has already asked me to retain a room for her. You will be in that closet there, which you can lock from the inside. At twelve o'clock to-night, after everybody has gone to bed, I'll step out of my room and ring that fire bell in the hall. If Mrs. Pruitt does not jump from bed and run from the room the watchman will come and rouse her. After she has left the room and entered the hall you will open the closet and step forth, looking like a man just roused from peaceful slumbers. Mrs. Pruitt will herself take good care to call your presence to the notice of every one present. You will not force your company on her further, but will retire like a gentleman. And Mrs. Pruitt will have lost her right to sue for divorce!"

"It sounds like a logical proposition," said Mr. Pruitt, who had listened narrowly. "I warn you that I shall shoot you like a dog if there is any trickery in it."

"You must get into your night dress," said Little Amby.

"Won't she see my clothing here?"

"No. I'll take them across the hall to my room. It won't occur to any one to look for them at the time and you can come over there to dress or pass the rest of the night, as you please."

"I can't see any harm in it," growled Mr. Pruitt.

"None at all. As between men of the world, you have no reputation to lose."

"That's so too," grinned Mr. Pruitt, who was beginning to take quite a fancy to this foresighted little man.

"And the check?" suggested Little Amby, when Mr. Pruitt had disrobed for slumber. "C. O. D., Mr. Pruitt. If the thing miscarries, there's no fear of us trying to cash it; but I'd like to have it in my hands."

"I'll fix it so you won't want to cash it, not unless you're still friendly with me," said Mr. Pruitt with a crafty glance. And he sat down and wrote a check for two thou-

sand dollars to the order of Hope & Hellwell; and on the back of it he wrote *For Services in case of Pruitt vs. Pruitt.*

"You could disbar us with the evidence of that canceled check," agreed Little Amby. "That's the least you could do. But we're going to stay on friendly terms with you, Mr. Pruitt. No doubt we'll do business together again."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Mr. Pruitt.

"Better lock yourself in," suggested Little Amby when the gentleman was in the closet. "Don't be nervous; you can come out any time you please."

He gathered up Mr. Pruitt's clothing and left the room, closing the door behind him. He crossed the hall to his own room and sat inside and watched the hall.

After fifteen minutes had elapsed he rose and knocked at the door of an adjoining room. The door was opened at once and a tall and clean-shaven man thrust out his head.

"Come ahead!" said Little Amby, after a glance about. The new arrival followed him to the door of Mr. Pruitt's room; Little Amby fumbled noisily with the lock and then threw the door open.

"This is your room, Mrs. Pruitt," he said in loud but respectful tones. "I've instructed the clerk to call you at five in the morning. Good night—and pleasant dreams!"

And he shut the door.

The clean-shaven man sat on the edge of the bed and pulled off his shoes. He took off the rest of his outer clothing. He then leisurely pulled himself into the brown and braided suit of Mr. Pruitt and forced his feet into Mr. Pruitt's red silk socks and patent-leather shoes. With care he adjusted Mr. Pruitt's red silk cravat and set upon his head the brown derby. He made no special effort to mask the noise of his movements, although he looked once or twice at the door of the closet. Little Amby had borne Mr. Pruitt's clothing with him into the room again.

There was a knock at the door. The impersonator stepped out quickly, closing the door lightly behind him, and took the telegram offered him by the bell hop. He read the message at once:

Cannot come to Hoboken as you request. You may talk to my lawyers, whose representative is at the Cambodia here. MATILDA PRUITT.

"No answer," said the clean-shaven gen-

tleman softly. And he gave the boy his tip and stepped lightly back into the room. The identity of this fellow has never been established; there is excellent reason to believe that he was a hotel thief named Kepler, or Kippler, who was at that time under an obligation to the firm of Hope & Hellwell. You understand that I am giving you Pruitt's story, with such additional information as I have been able to collect. The theory that there ever was an impersonator at all was discredited by the appellate division when they affirmed the decision of the court below, refusing to set aside the service of the complaint in *Pruitt vs. Pruitt*.

The fellow then attached to his upper lip a flowing black mustache, compared his work with the tintype, assumed Mr. Pruitt's paddock with the swagger mink collar, took Mr. Pruitt's ebony cane with silver head, and turned out the light. He then reposed himself on the bed for a space, snorted, sighed, rose noiselessly and tiptoed from the room.

Little Amby joined him in the hall. They descended to the lobby. The impersonator bore heavily on his cane, sank his neck into the mink and hobbled across the foyer to the doorway.

"I'm going out with Mr. Pruitt!" called Little Amby to the clerk.

The two rascals went down to the ferry. Here Little Amby got into a squabble with the ticket seller over a Canadian quarter which he claimed the ticket seller had given him in change. The ticket seller remembered him later and he remembered also the gentleman in the natty overcoat and derby who had thrust his head in at the ticket window and said that he would pull the ticket agent's nose a yard long. He identified this person positively and resentfully with Mr. Pruitt.

The two men crossed to New York. On the ferry the impersonator dropped Mr. Pruitt's spectacle case, which was later recovered from the lost-property office. They rode to the Cambodia, which was then an eminently respectable family hotel on Broadway near Fourteenth Street. The impersonator gave one of his cards to the clerk and asked to be announced to Mrs. Pruitt's attorneys.

"There is a gentleman expecting you, Mr. Pruitt," said the clerk, dropping the card on his desk, whence it was retrieved in due course.

"Mr. Pruitt!" called Magistrate Hellwell from an easy-chair in the lobby.

"Yes, sir," answered the impersonator, going toward him. They shook hands and sat together.

The conversation between these worthy gentlemen was testified to by the clerk, whose notice was attracted by their mounting tones. He has testified that Mr. Pruitt was pleading and that Magistrate Hellwell grew increasingly brusque in his denials. Then the supposed Mr. Pruitt went to a writing stand and busied himself there, and returned and tendered a check to the magistrate. The latter gave it the most cursory glance, tore it in two, gestured to Little Amby.

"Serve the complaint, Mr. Hinkle!" he cried in great indignation.

Little Amby stepped forward gallantly and handed the complaint to the impersonator. The latter glanced at it, thrust it into his pocket and dropped his head onto his chest. And then he suddenly whipped out a pistol. He fired it, apparently at Little Amby, but with very bad aim, for he missed him but broke a heavy Satsuma vase which stood on a pedestal against the wall of the lobby, which vase the hotel people valued at four hundred dollars. They recovered this sum later from Mr. Pruitt; incidentally they had to prove that he was the man who had broken the jar.

The impersonator dropped the revolver to the floor and hobbled through a side door to the street. Here, by mysterious good fortune, a cab was waiting. He sprang into it and was whirled away to the Hoboken ferry.

Forty minutes later he limped through the lobby of the Hotel Honduras in Hoboken. The clerk spoke to him but he did not reply. He ascended the stairs to his room. There he took off Mr. Pruitt's clothing. After watching his chance he slipped across the hall to Mr. Pruitt's room and placed the clothing on a chair, where Mr. Pruitt found it when he was weary of waiting in the closet. He returned to his own room and to bed. The fire alarm was not sounded at any time during the night.

The New York police applied to the Hoboken authorities next day for the arrest of Mr. Pruitt on a charge of malicious mischief prepared by the Cambodia people and on a charge of felonious assault preferred by Little Amby. Mr. Pruitt

denied having been in New York but he could bring no witness to vouch that he had spent the hour in question in Hoboken. On Little Amby's charge he was put under heavy bonds to keep the peace. Mrs. Pruitt obtained her final decree in due course; there is no reason to believe that she was advised of the manner in which the complaint was served.

The version of the story I have given here is the one favored by most attorneys whom I have heard discussing the case. They say that the rejection of the two-thousand-dollar check—which was put in evidence at the hearing to prove that Mr. Pruitt tried to bribe Little Amby not to serve the complaint—was characteristic of the little schemer; he would do any villainy to win a lawsuit and he was greedy of money, but he would not betray a client. No, never. To that extent he was an artist. His single virtue carried him far.

In viewing with critical eye the career of any great villain we observe that he achieved his immediate ends by rascality but that his continuance in good fortune rested upon his possession of some sterling virtues. As Robin Hood—who robbed and murdered, but gave to the poor, who sheltered him in thanks; as Napoleon—who bankrupted his country and killed his million men, but who was democratic and established democracy in Europe. The success of such willful men calls for inquiry; it is puzzling and challenging; at first glance only is it scandalizing.

CHAPTER VII.

Some days after the service of the complaint in *Pruitt vs. Pruitt* Little Amby was walking down Grand Street. At this hour of the astronomical day—one o'clock in the morning—Little Amby was always to be encountered walking down Grand Street. On five nights of the week, from Monday to Friday inclusive, he would cross Grand Street to the corner of Lafayette and stand in a row of night workers and night prowlers against the dimly lit window of the drug store and wait for the morning's newspapers to come up from Park Row. On securing his paper he would bear it home, knock on his mother's door to get her drowsy good night, undress, prop himself with pillows, and set to leisurely reading. At half past two he put out his light and went to sleep, arising promptly at the first

whiff of bacon and coffee from the dark little kitchen. On Sunday nights in the summer he went to Coney Island; in the winter he attended a sacred concert at Goldfogle's Burlesque Theater. On this particular night—Saturday—he was bound for Steve Hilley's saloon to engage in the poker game which began on the stroke of one and ran until the day bartender came on at six. Little Amby led a very regular existence; he loved order and methodical ways.

The barroom of Steve Hilley's place was dark, as was usual and proper at this hour; a light shone opalescent behind the cathedral glass in the windows of the back room. Little Amby did not notice at once that there was not the customary jolly rumble of voices behind the windows—the loud laugh which bespeaks the empty goblet, the generous contention over payment for a round of beers, the simple and touching ballad in praise of home, or mother, or green lanes in apple-blossom time. His mind was busied with a legal problem and he stepped into the family entrance, and so into the back room without noticing anything unusual.

Beneath a solitary light sat Steve Hilley in the company of a solitary but rather contented-looking policeman.

"What's up?" asked Little Amby.

"Friend of mine," said Steve Hilley to the policeman.

"Sure," nodded the officer.

"Excuse me," said Steve Hilley. And he rose and went to another table, and turned up the gas light above it, and motioned to Little Amby to seat himself there.

"What's up, Steve?" He was well acquainted with Steve Hilley but he would have called him by his first name in any event, as it is etiquette to so address a politician.

"They've put the coppers in on me."

"What for?"

"Search me! You know I haven't been trying to get away with anything. But Brannigan there walks into my barroom at half past eleven to-night and stays there until I close up, and then he comes inside here. He says it's the orders of the new inspector, this man Campbell. If this thing keeps up it's going to play the deuce with business; I'm not talking so much about this back room, which I only keep open to accommodate my customers; what I mean is, it will kill my business in regular hours.

You can't expect customers to walk into a saloon where they're liable to run into a policeman! That's out of the question."

"Can't you get him taken out?"

"No. I sent to the right people to-night as soon as he walked in and they sent word back that they couldn't do a thing. The trouble is with this man Campbell, the inspector."

"What's the trouble with him?"

"He can't be touched. He's a most unreasonable man and he won't listen to an argument. I went around to see him just now and he wouldn't talk to me. Can you imagine? He wouldn't talk to *me!* He sent out word that all I had to do was obey the law and the officer wouldn't interfere, but that the officer was going to stay right where he was put. He said he heard that disorderly characters hang out here, and that I keep open after hours, and that was against the law and he was going to see that it stopped. Can you imagine such a fool argument? I've been thirty years in the liquor business and I've never seen the excise law enforced in New York—except for a little while last year while that young fellow Roosevelt was down at headquarters—and everybody knew *he* couldn't last!"

"This Campbell won't take money?"

"No."

"Who gave him his job?"

"Nobody. He just worked up."

"What's his nationality?"

"Campbell ain't got any nationality. He ain't English or Irish or German or anything. He's just a New York fellow."

"What's his politics?"

"He ain't got any politics."

"And he don't take money?"

"No, he don't."

"Can't you get him transferred?"

"I hate to do that. It makes a bad impression when you can't get along with the police. And Campbell is the very fellow to raise a fuss and call for an inquiry. He's plenty shrewd enough to make trouble."

"What do you suppose is the matter with him that he's so queer?" muttered Little Amby with wrinkled brow.

"Search me."

"Has he got any grudge against you?"

"I never gave him any reason."

They sat silent, going over in thought—as though with experienced fingers and inch by inch—the sheer wall of Inspector Campbell's rectitude.

Little Amby suddenly lifted his head.

"I'll bet money he's religious!" he exclaimed.

"Well—so he is," said Steve Hilley, not relievedly but with increased respect at this evidence of Little Amby's thinking power. "He goes every Sunday morning to St. John's, up on Spring Street. My daughter Cissie goes up there and she's seen him."

Little Amby nodded briskly. He had the elements of the problem. He had devised his approach to Inspector Campbell.

"So does my mother," he said. "What's this the minister's name is?"

"Golden—or Golding."

"We're going up to see the Reverend Golden to-morrow."

"Do you think that's what we ought to do?"

"That's all we can do. What do you say if you meet me to-morrow morning at eight o'clock outside the church?"

"But, listen. I don't know how to talk to him!"

"I'll make the *spiel*."

"We'll try it on," agreed Steve Hilley.

The next morning Little Amby astonished his mother by joining her at her breakfast.

"Busted?" she inquired solicitously.

"Nope. I'm going up to the church."

"You'd ought to be ashamed of yourself to lie on Sunday mornings, Amby," she said, scandalized. "If you don't go to church you ain't got to make a mock of it. Where *are* you going?"

"I got a date to play stuss over in back of Blumenthal's cigar store."

"That's better," she said, moving her triple chin in and out. "Much better!"

He went up to Spring Street. Steve Hilley was standing before the iron railing of the church with one hand in the breast of his Prince Albert and his face composed to an expression of melancholy dignity.

The two early-morning callers ascended the steps of the little house which served as a rectory, and rang the bell. An elderly housekeeper showed them into the minister's study and went upstairs to announce them.

Little Amby glanced sharply about the plainly furnished room. He was unacquainted with the Reverend Golden. There was nothing striking in the chamber, except a life-size marble bust of a cleric which stood on top of a small bookcase.

A gray-haired clergyman came to the

doorway and bowed. He was an elderly man of middle stature, with large and handsome features. His cast of countenance was like that of Steve Hilley—or of ex-President McKinley, or of a highly successful bucket-shop keeper, general, or bank president pictured in the act of clasping the hand of the young man who has studied the correspondence course—straightforward and confidence breeding. He was a likable man, with mild and incurious eyes. He resembled facially the marble bust on the bookcase. Little Amby glanced again at the bust. The clergyman smiled with innocent vanity.

"Do you see the likeness?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed," said Little Amby. "Some relation, was he?"

"It is myself. I chip a little in my spare time and naturally I cannot afford a model. So I copied myself in a mirror."

Little Amby stepped on Steve Hilley's foot and they arose and stood together and stared at the bust.

"It's a knock-out," breathed Steve Hilley, genuinely overcome. "And you made that *yourself*? Well, that certainly beats all I ever saw! He made that himself!"

"It's nothing so very wonderful," demurred the Reverend Golden.

"Get out!" said Steve Hilley. "Sat right down and rapped it off while you looked in a mirror, hey? Well, all I got to say is I bet I couldn't make a statue like that if I was to work for a week. I got a boy in my club named Hymie Silverblatt and he's nifty with a chisel and hammer and he gets up on a couple of horses and cuts a man's head on the front of a building while you're looking at him. Flowers he cuts too, and bananas and pineapples. Well, of course, be's in the business, and you can't compare an amateur and a professional, that stands to reason—but that there job of yours up there——"

"Shut up," breathed Little Amby. And Steve Hilley's gesticulatory arm drifted slowly down. He was a shrewd man but he had been thrown off his balance by finding himself suddenly confronted by a man who did the highest grade of stone cutting as a mere pastime.

"We're parishioners of yours, pastor," said Little Amby. "My name is Hinkle; and this is Mr. Hilley. Maybe you've seen my mother in church oftener than you saw me—Mrs. Hinkle, a stout lady who always

carries an umbrella? And Mr. Hilley's daughter sings in your choir."

"I know Miss Hilley well," acknowledged the minister. "She has a beautiful voice. You ought to have it trained, Mr. Hilley."

"Oh, no," said Steve Hilley. "She'll never have to work for a living. And besides, I like her better where she is. So long as she can't sing she'll stay in a church choir but if she once learned how she would want to go on the stage. And I'll have no daughter of mine wearing tights."

"You're an old-fashioned father," said the minister, indulgently rather than commendingly. "Several of my parishioners are stage people."

"Mr. Hilley is in the liquor business, pastor," said Little Amby. "You are not prejudiced against the liquor business, are you?"

"Not unless it is conducted as an occasion of sin," said the minister gravely. "The gifts of God are to be used and not abused."

"You can take my word for it, pastor," said Steve Hilley earnestly, "that I'm in the liquor business only to make a living!"

"Mr. Hilley has got into a little jam with the police," said Little Amby. "It seems people have been bearing false witness against him and saying he runs a dump. You can take my word it's not so, pastor, because I've been in that place at all hours of the day and night and it's a perfectly respectable family resort and a credit to the neighborhood. But somebody tipped the police, and they put a patrolman in there, and that is driving away Mr. Hilley's best trade, as, naturally, respectable and law-abiding people will not be seen going into a place which has to be watched by the police."

"I can understand that," nodded the Reverend Golden. "But why do you come to me, gentlemen?"

"We want to have that patrolman taken out," said Little Amby. "Mr. Hilley has been up to see the inspector, but the inspector won't give him an audience, so to speak. So I suggested to Mr. Hilley that we go and see some prominent man and get a line to the inspector just asking him to listen. We don't want any influence, you understand, pastor. Just a line asking the inspector to listen. And we hit on you as being the most prominent man in the neighborhood."

"I have some little prominence in my own field," admitted the minister benignantly.

"I can see no harm in giving you a line to this man, if you think it will aid you. I will not suggest any course of action to him."

He sat down at a writing desk and drew toward him a sheaf of his official stationery.

"What is his name?"

"What's his name?" repeated Little Amby to Steve Hilley.

"That's funny," frowned the saloon keeper. "It just slipped away from me. It begins with a K. Kaplan? Kittredge? No, that ain't it!"

"Cameron?" suggested Little Amby.

Steve Hilley snapped his fingers embarrassedly. "I can't seem to get it. Well, all right, let it go. Just start off 'My dear inspector.'"

"My dear inspector," murmured the Reverend Golden, writing:

This will introduce to you Mr. Stephen Hilley, who is one of my parishioners. He is anxious to talk to you concerning his trouble with the police. I shall be obliged to you if you will grant him a hearing. Very truly yours,
HENRY A. GOLDEN, Rector.

They took this note, thanked the pastor, and left the rectory.

The Reverend Golden stood for a time in thought. There was an expression of distaste on his fine features. And, still, what harm could there be in what he had done? Every man is entitled to a hearing, in common justice. He walked slowly to a lavatory and went to washing his hands.

CHAPTER VIII.

"It worked like a charm!" said Steve Hilley. "He wouldn't talk to me this time neither, the inspector wouldn't, but when he saw the letter from the parson he just shrugged his shoulders and said it would be all right. And it looks all right, don't it?"

Little Amby grinned gratulatingly; the back room of Steve Hilley's place did look all right. The patrolman was gone and the habitués had flocked back. Two hard-faced youths were busy carrying dripping trays to them where they sat at the twenty little tables. The night was young—it was half past one, and only a half hour after legal hours—but already most of them were feeling good. The laborers who sat in the windy corner by the door were smiling over the rims of their schooners as they engulfed drafts of lager, the chorus girls who had

the table of honor in the center were yelling with laughter at some jest which their silk-hatted escort had made concerning the boiling champagne, five young men with their heads in touch were harmonizing on "A Boy's Best Friend is His Mother," six gentlemen at six tables were telling six patiently smiling ladies what good fellows they were, and against the farther wall a dignified physician was playing pinochle with a professional beggar, a retired police lieutenant and a head waiter off duty. The atmosphere was genial and clubby.

"I got a head on my shoulders," said Steve Hilley, "but it would never have occurred to me to go to that parson with my troubles. You are certainly a great kid for getting ideas; Hellwell was telling me about you. How do you do it?"

"Oh, I just figure people out," said Little Amby complacently. "Every man has got his blind side and it's all a matter of knowing how to get at him. I just learn all I can about a man and then I figure him, and figure him, and all of a sudden I know how to get at him."

"It's a great gift," said Steve Hilley appreciatively. "Say how is it I never see you around my Six Nations Club? Ain't you old enough to vote?"

"You mean your political club? Well, I never took much interest in politics. And then, I'm not old enough to vote yet, not according to law."

"Every man ought to take an interest in politics. It would be worth his while, if he can get in right. And I could put you in right. I could use you over at the Six Nations."

"Doing what? Spellbinding?"

"Some of that, too. Hellwell says you're a swell orator. There's always room for a good orator in politics; a man who can get the people interested in national politics—Washington, and Jefferson, and the flag and the boys in blue, and all that stuff—is a big help in keeping their minds off what is happening right here in the district, which is not always right to talk about. But that is not all of it. I could use a young fellow that has got a good head and does not spend his time conspiring to be the leader."

"All right. I'll come around to the Six Nations."

Steve Hilley nodded and they sat back and smoked their strong cigars and watched the company. Little Amby was gifted with

a tough constitution and a stomach that was indifferent to abuse; he inhaled the searing fumes of the rank tobacco with tranquil enjoyment. His black eyes were bright; his lips were red and his skin was sallow but healthily tinted. He could sit all night at gambling and smoke a half dozen Manila cigars and drink in all a fair pint of neat whisky and pay less in bodily suffering for his fun than might a dyspeptic who drank a cup of tea and ate a jelly doughnut at a church sociable. This, of course, was his misfortune; a sick stomach—when gotten in a saloon, and not at a church sociable—is a blessing in disguise and a warning to mend one's ways.

"What do you suppose is the game of these folks who are always hollering against saloons?" inquired Steve Hilley, making talk.

"I never heard anybody say anything against saloons," said Little Amby, taking the cigar from his mouth.

"You would, if you traveled in some circles," said Steve Hilley.

"Oh, you mean swearing off," said Little Amby. "Like Hughie, who goes home from the poker game every Sunday morning cursing himself for a fool to lose his time and sleep. But I notice he's shuffling the cards and watching the door every Saturday night when I come in."

"No, I mean people that never come into a saloon, but are against saloons on principle. There's lots of people like that; you wouldn't believe it."

"Well, where would a fellow spend his time if there were no saloons?"

"That's the point," said Steve Hilley. "If a young fellow has got money he joins a good club and if he has not got money he joins a good saloon. And then he has a place to go. When he comes in the bartender is always glad to see him, and will listen to his troubles for an hour. And if the bartender is busy the young fellow will go to a customer, and lean on him and tell him his troubles. That is very nice for a young fellow with something on his mind. And if he has nothing on his mind and cannot think of anything he can always go in his saloon and have a beer to pass the time away, can't he? No, it would be a cold world without a saloon. Can you imagine a young fellow with something on his mind trying to lean on a man on a street and tell him his troubles? The man would tell him

to go and lean on his dinner and tell his troubles to the fat cop. Am I right?"

"That is how it is," nodded Little Amby.

"I heard a man say at a meeting once that there was nothing in the world like the American saloon; and when he passed the hat I gave him a quarter, because I like a good patriotic speech. And it turned out that he was not making a patriotic speech at all, but was running down America and saying the American saloon was no good. He was one of these temperance fellows. Well, I was young then and I got up and said I was a saloon keeper and if he would step down and put up his hands like a man we would settle the question right then and there. And he jumped down and licked the tar out of me. Well, when I thought it over I saw that that was not the right way to settle the question after all, since what does it prove?"

"You're dead right," said Little Amby.

"To-night," continued Steve Hilley, "at a quarter to one, I am thinking of closing my front doors when in comes big Bill Woody. You know big Bill Woody. He weighs a ton. He comes in, leaning over, and he is loaded; I do not know where he gets it but he is loaded. He starts across the floor to a chair and I holler and run out from behind my bar and catch a hold of him, because I know he will fall asleep the minute he hits the chair and then I will not be able to get him up with dynamite. Naturally I am very sore with Bill Woody for wanting to come into my place and sleep it off, after he has spent all his money somewhere else, and I run out and grab a hold of him and steer him around and run him out the door. And a woman is passing on the sidewalk, one of these old crabs, and she sees me coming out behind Bill Woody and she starts in to lay me out for trying to drag that poor man into my place and calls me a greedy and heartless Republican."

"A—*publican*?"

"A Republican—yes. Do you call that justice? You know the kind of a place I run here—a respectable family resort. I would not give my own brother another drink if I thought he had all he could carry. I got no use for drunken men. If I had my way I would pass a law to give every drunk thirty days on the Island, as he is nothing but a nuisance. You know I don't let bad characters into my place and I don't stand for loud cursing or swearing. This place is

just as respectable as anywheres else and my customers know they can bring their wife or sister in here and treat her to a drink and not get insulted. They know that if they do happen to get lit up they will be treated just as nice as in their own home and maybe a whole lot better. And the result is I got the best trade on the avenue, all ladies and gentlemen, well dressed and respectable, and none of that rough element. If I could get these temperance fellows to come into my place and sit down and have a drink or two and look around them they would go down on their knees and apologize for the way they run down the American saloon."

"Hello, Steve," called a growling voice.

Little Amby looked up. "Pink" Wheeler—ward heeler, street fighter and lady-killer—was standing in the doorway with a smile upon his florid face. To his arm was clinging timidly a tall girl of seventeen or eighteen; over her dress she wore a dark cloak; its hood was drawn over her hair, giving to her face a Quakerish aspect which was heightened by the parted lips and the wondering stare in the widened gray eyes.

"Papa!" said the girl, smiling relievedly as Steve Hilley rose suddenly to his feet and crossed to her.

"Thanks for bringing her here, Pink," he said in a conversational tone.

"I wanted to surprise you," she said gayly. "I met Mr. Wheeler up at St. John's just now, where the Ladies' Sodality is rehearsing theatricals. His sister is in the cast and he comes around to watch her act. He offered to see me home to-night and I accepted because his sister May is going home with the Spiegelbergs. And I told him I never saw your place of business and he said he would bring me around here and surprise you!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Steve Hilley. "It was certainly a fine surprise, to see you standing there in that doorway. Well, now, Cissie, run along home like a good little girl. No—don't wait for Pink."

The trio passed through the doorway again and so into the street.

Little Amby sat smoking, with rapidly blinking eyes. He thought that Cissie Hilley was the prettiest girl he had ever seen.

From the street came suddenly a sound of snarling and wheezing. A customer went to the door and poked his head out. He came back with white face.

"Hurry up! hurry up!" he cried. "Steve Hilley is killing a guy outside—he's got him up against the wall and he's choking him to death!"

CHAPTER IX.

Little Amby ascended the worn gray steps of the Six Nations clubhouse, which was one of the old red-brick fronts with white marble trim, built in the district before the Civil War. The springing up of tenement houses—called "French flats" then—to accommodate the tide of immigration had changed the residential character of the section; the wealthy American families had moved away, as they had moved away from the Bowery in an earlier decade, and their pseudo-Colonial houses had been taken over by the newcomers. On the once immaculate steps lounged a group of trig and bold-eyed young men, native borns of the first generation, Americans of that sturdily independent but somewhat brash and sophisticated type which cherishes its parents with loving condescension as ignorant though well-meaning old micks and wops and Dutchmen.

Little Amby entered the uncarpeted hall. The house was a male stamping ground now and it had about it that hard and even brutal cheerfulness which characterizes places where men gather without women. Men degenerate rapidly into hairy apes when they shut their women out; they sink rapidly in manners, morals, civilization. It is by a sound instinct that men insist on the double standard of morality, for in protecting their women they are protecting themselves. Woman, to whom is intrusted the overshadowing business of continuing the race, is also the perhaps unwitting custodian of its chivalry, its decency, its increasing differentiation from the beasts that perish. No doubt we may look for an act of Congress very shortly—now that women have the vote—making men and women just the same; but at this writing it is not yet treason to say that there are between men and women certain essential differences.

Here, in the Six Nations, any good fellow was sure of an audience for an indecent story; the audience roared with laughter if the story was funny and sneered openly at the raconteur if it wasn't. The members spoke familiarly to and of one another as thieves and other still more disagreeable things. Of course they were only playing at being hairy apes, as yet; beyond the doors

were the sanitative women. Those of you who have been segregated for long periods in male company will remember the thrill of pure gladness which went through you when you first again saw a woman; she was like an angel come down.

The main floor, which had been the sedate parlors of the old house, was now given over to assembly rooms. Here the rank and file, men having a vote and a fist and nothing more, gathered to meet their friends and to swap jokes and to gamble in a petty way. Among the tables moved the club steward, dealing out kummel and anisette and absinth and whisky, stopping harassedly to shout a promise of his coming to the lounging occupants of the rocking-chairs behind the long French windows overlooking the street.

Little Amby ascended the dirty-white stairs. In a square chamber were gathered about a poker table the wise men of the Six Nations, the men of worth and substance and character—the big and dignified leader Steve Hilley; the O'Riley who kept the hotel, a man whose eyes perpetually twinkled, with speculation when he was unobserved and with geniality when his glance was returned; Magistrate Hellwell; Ohmberg, the alderman; Brauer, the contractor; Peretti, the bulky and slumberous-eyed labor padrone. Through the open door Little Amby caught a view of this august cabinet and then Steve Hilley rose and came out into the hall, closing the door behind him.

He nodded shortly to Little Amby and turned to interview the line of citizens who had come to see the leader.

"What is it, Mrs. Brady?"

"It is about the rent, sir. Sure, the landlord—bad cess to him—is after asking me for the flat, and where am I to go, and me with six bits of childher? In all the length and breadth of his seven hells the devil has no landlord like my landlord, and more's the pity, for he can have him and welcome. A dried-up little tinker of a man he is indeed, so he is——"

"Now, now! Your case came up in the municipal court this morning and I had somebody there to answer for you. My man explained to the judge the trouble you were in, what with Brady dying on you unexpected and all that, and the judge said it was a very worthy case, and it went against his grain to issue the warrant, and

what did the landlord want him to do about it. And the landlord said he'd give you two more weeks."

"See that now! Two weeks, is it? Sure, there's no harm in the man at all, at all. It's himself is the decent little man. Faith, and I always said, so I did, and say it again I will, that you could drag the streets of New York with a fish net, so you could, and not catch a decenter little man betune this and Harlem. It's not lying to me, you are, Mister Hilley? Faith, and if it's lying you are, I'll lay my five thumbs across that landlord or ever I leave his house and put a mark on the deceiving, black-hearted little ha'porth of——"

"Now, now, Mrs. Brady. Don't get excited. Nothing is going to happen to your children, or to you, so don't get excited. Good night. Yes, I understand all that. Go right downstairs now and go home. Good night! Hello, Moe."

"It's about my theater, Steve," said the proprietor of Goldfogle's Burlesque Theater. "The fire department wants I should put up an iron stairways down the side of my theater and promises me they will close me up if I don't."

"Well, why don't you build the stairway?"

"With your money I would build it! Do you know how much costs it to build that stairways? I don't own the land next door and the sucker what owns it asks me I should pay a million for a little three feet to build it my stairway. He thinks he got me by the nape of the pants and almost a thousand dollars he wants. Oi, what a blood squeezer! But if I don't build it, where am I? Might you could tell me, Steve."

"You're in the soup. Say, Moe, we were thinking of running off a benefit for the club and I was thinking that your theater would suit us."

"One hand washes the other, ain't it, Steve?"

"Will you promise the department to build that stairway?"

"Why, sure, I'll promise them. I'll give them my word of honor. But I'm telling you, Steve, as between gentlemen, that I can't do it!"

"All right. Promise them and I'll see they don't shut you up. And meanwhile keep trying to buy up that right of way next door cheap."

"Can I see you a minute in private, sport?" inquired the next client, approaching with rolling shoulders and putting out a big white hand on which diamonds sparkled. "Put it there! My name is Hatfield—'Honest Frank' Hatfield. I guess you heard of me."

"Yes, I heard of you," said the leader, keeping his hand by his side. "They used to call you 'Cold Deck Frank' in those days. What do you want to see me about?"

"Honest Frank, that's me, nowadays," said the gambler. "I'm off that crooked stuff, sport. It don't pay, and that's why. I'm thinking of opening up a social club in your neighborhood. What do you say? I'll make any fair arrangement."

"Social club?"

"Yes, social club. We'll probably run off rackets once in a while to show we're on the level. Dances and get-together dinners for business men and all that. We're going to call the joint The Business. That's a joke—see? If a member wants to say where he was, he says down at The Business. Pretty neat idea, eh?"

"Going to play cards at your social club?"

"Well, yes, naturally, to while away the time. Don't get it into your head that this is any gambling joint, sport. It's just a nice little joint where business men can keep busy."

"See me here at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. What's biting you, Gerrity?"

"What I'm here to know," said the bull-necked and red-headed Gerrity, "is—am I a regular guy or ain't I? Tell me, right out, if I ain't!"

"Why, certainly you're a regular guy, Gerrity."

"Then why is it I can't get no work in this district? Who is this guy Kelleher that comes into the district and starts to build a flat over on Attorney Street and hires his trucks off of a guy up on the West Side?"

"I never heard of Kelleher."

"Well, I'm telling you about him! Here's me, with half a dozen plugs eating their blamed heads off in my stable, and there's work going on in the district and me not getting a look in."

"I'll talk to Kelleher. Come around to-morrow night."

"I'm in a jam, boss," whined the next applicant, a genuine plug-ugly. "I am going home to my room last night about two o'clock, and walking along the Bowery

mind my own business, when a guy comes staggering out of a saloon and busts into me and near knocks me down. Well, I think he is picking on me to give me an argument, so I turn around and take it on the run. Well, I am just busting into my doorway when what should I see but a cop busting in after me. Well, the cop goes busting up to my room and starts looking for me, and I am down in the cellar, and I have to sleep on the coal, and now I am afraid to go home."

"The officer says you hit the man with a blackjack."

"That just goes to show you what liars them cops are, Steve! So help me—"

"Come, come! Where's the blackjack?"

"Well, if I had a blackjack I must have thrown it under the door into Taylor's place. I hear one was found there this morning and if I had it I must have thrown it under the door."

"The detective says you'll have to give up the citizen's watch."

"Well, I will look first and see if I have got his watch. I'm willing to be reasonable about this, Steve. What does that cop think I would want with taking the man's watch? Would I be knocking a guy down with a blackjack and running half a mile with a bad heart just to get a clock like that? Why, you'd ought to see it, Steve. Oh, I'll give him his watch if he's going to cry about it."

"Give it to the detective that's looking for you. And now get out of here. Go on—get out!"

"I'll tell you what you could do for me," said Steve Hillel to Little Amby when they were alone. "You know Gerrity the truckman that was here just now? Well, go around and see this fellow Kelleher that's complaining about and tell Kelleher that I want him to use Gerrity's trucks. Tell him I'll make him sick if he doesn't. You'll know how to put it to him nicely, but so as he'll understand. And you can tell him too that he's going to take fifty dollars' worth of tickets for the club's benefit next month. I got to run down to the store now. You can go in there and play the rest of my stack."

"You bet, Steve!" chuckled Little Amby, delighted with the prospect of getting into a big game on a shoe string. He had long been ambitious to graduate from the poker game in Steve Hillel's place and to get into

a stiff game with gentlemen, who should bet their hands with magnificent disregard of odds, and should lose large sums to him with the utmost sang-froid and without setting up at once a heart-rending yowling and lamenting in the hope of crying themselves into the next big pot. If he drew aces next to the opener he would boost, and hold a kicker and draw two, and boost again if the opener drew three. And if a player beyond him boosted and drew one he would watch that player, unobtrusively but with hawk-like vigilance, to see how he received that single card, and to read the emotion which it caused in him. Little Amby liked poker, which is a childishly simple game, requiring nothing of the adept except a profound knowledge of human nature.

CHAPTER X.

"Where's Kelleher?" asked Little Amby of the coal-blackened man who was running the hoisting engine beside the excavation for the new tenement in Attorney Street.

"He's down there in the lot."

"Tell him I want to see him," said Little Amby, stepping gingerly and scraping a smear of wet clay from his highly polished shoe. He was always brusque and imperious with men in dirty clothes, whom he considered patently members of the lower class of humanity.

The coal-blackened man—a respected and self-respecting member of the Brotherhood of Stationary Engineers—raised his sooty eyebrows and grinned slightly.

"Hey, Jim!" he shouted.

A muffled voice answered from the earth.

"There's a young fellow up here wants to see you!"

"Tell him to come down here," rumbled the voice.

"Jim says go down," said the engineer. He pushed a lever and there was a rattling of cables and a stiff leg derrick at the farther end of the lot raised a "clam-shell" bucket of soft muck and swung it slowly and majestically across to the truck waiting on the runway.

Little Amby stepped to the edge of the lot. Directly below him a shaft, four feet square, had been sunk into the soft ooze. It was about twenty feet deep; its boarded sides were filthy with the yellow muck which seeped through the joints. At the bottom of this shaft he made out the forms of two

dirty men who were grubbing with shovels. The rough ladder which was nailed to one of the sides shone with wet mud.

"He doesn't think I'd go down there, does he?" grumbled Little Amby disgustedly. "Tell him to come up!"

"The young fellow says 'Come up,' Jim!" shouted the engineer.

One of the dirty men at the bottom of the shaft looked up and then began the ascent of the ladder. He climbed to the level of the lot, threw over a leg and scrambled to the sidewalk.

He was a big man of twenty-four or twenty-five, slim-waisted and wide-shouldered, with great hairy hands which were the color of the soil. He was dressed in a blue flannel shirt, an old sack suit which was muddied at the shoulders and along the outer sides of the trousers, and a pair of untanned brogues. His hair was thick and black and curly, his eyebrows were thick and black and his chin was blue. This man spoke to the engineer, after fastening his dark-gray eyes on Little Amby for an instant.

"I guess we can put in the footing in that hole," he said. "It's down to hard pan."

His voice was a pleasing baritone.

"Here's the young fellow, Jim," said the sooty engineer.

"Selling brick?" asked Jim Kelleher, silently taking the cigar butt from the engineer's mouth and lighting his brier with it.

"No," said Little Amby.

"Ice boxes?"

"No. I'm selling peace and good will!"

"Can't use any," said Jim Kelleher. "I'd rather fight than eat. But, whatever you're selling, mister, I can't use it. Everything is give out, from wrecking to window cleaning. Good day!"

"Just a minute, Jim," said Little Amby, walking after the contractor.

"Who's Jim?" asked Kelleher, pausing. His tone was mild but Little Amby noticed that the engineer passed a hand across his unshaven face as though to rub away his returning grin.

"Don't get peevish," requested Little Amby, following him again. "I'm from Steve Hilley. He asked me to come around here and see you."

"Who's Steve Hilley?"

"Why, he's the leader of the district."

"Politician? I don't know him. I don't take any interest in politics."

"Every man ought to take an interest in politics. That's his duty as a good citizen. We all got to help one another, you know."

"I'm managing to get along pretty well by myself."

"Well, you'd get along a whole lot better if you'd do your duty and take a little interest in politics. Say, what's your objection to employing Gerrity the truckman?"

"What do you care?"

"Well, Gerrity is a member in good standing of the Six Nations which is the local organization club. Naturally, we like to see him get along well too. And when there's work going on in the district that our members can do, we believe in putting in a good word for them."

"All right, mister. You've put in a good word for him."

"Will you take his trucks?"

"No."

"Listen, Kel," said Little Amby patronizingly. "I don't think you quite get the idea. Steve Hilley wants you to give this work to Gerrity, and Steve Hilley is leader of the district and what he says goes! It goes not only here in the district but it goes anywhere in the city, because he's an executive member of the general council of the city organization. Now, a man in your line of business wants to get in right, either with us or with the other organization, because you're dealing with city departments all day long and they got you where the hair is short. I'm suggesting that you come in with us, because we're regular fellows, and will treat you right, and we can get you anything in reason, either through our own men or through the other organization which works along with us, one hand washing the other, as the saying goes. See, Kel?"

Jim Kelleher made a rumbling noise through his big nose. He turned and smiled at Little Amby. "What could you do for me?" he said.

"Well," said Little Amby, with a large wave of his little white hand, "we could get the department to pass your plans, for instance. We could get violations taken off your job. There's a pile of sand that's all of twenty feet from the curb and the department of streets and highways is liable to send a truck up here and take it away. Oh, well, Kel, you're in the business and you know that there's a hundred and one things

you're liable to do that's against the building code or the city ordinances and so on. If you're in right you won't be eternally pestered by policemen and inspectors. You know how that is!"

"And if I'm not in right you'll see that I'm in wrong, eh?"

"Oh, I wouldn't say *that*."

"Is there anything else, mister?"

"There's a matter of a little racket the club is running off. From what I hear of you, you're a good fellow, Kel, and you won't object to taking a few tickets just to prove yourself. You wouldn't kick on fifty dollars' worth, would you?"

"Why should I?" chuckled Jim Kelleher. "What's fifty dollars? Come over here, young fellow, until I show you what you can do for me. Look down there!"

"Where?" asked Little Amby, peering over the side of the excavation.

Jim Kelleher waved his arm and the sooty engineer grinned understandingly, and started his puffing engine, and swung the leg of the derrick toward the two men.

"Down there," said Jim Kelleher. "Lean over. Don't be afraid; this plank won't break. You see the edge of the old wall down there? Here—I'll hold onto you!"

He caught Little Amby by his smart little leather belt, and lifted his jacket, and reached up for the chain of the derrick. He slipped the hook under the belt.

The engineer pushed a lever, the cables tightened and the leg of the derrick rose into the air, twitching Little Amby from his feet and swinging him over the excavation. He hung there, kicking and screaming with panic. Slowly and majestically the leg of the derrick swung across to the truck waiting on the runway.

"Get me off this!" yelled Little Amby to the driver, who stood on the rear wheel looking wonderingly up.

The engineer let Little Amby down with a run; he fell softly into the muck with which the truck was filled. The driver reached forward and disengaged the hook. The cable which pulled the trucks up the runway was already tightening and the driver sprang to his seat to manage his team, leaving Little Amby to climb as best he could over the high sides.

"Take it away!" shouted Jim Kelleher, laughing. "Do me a favor, mister, and jump off the end of the dock with the rest of that dirt!"

"I'll get you for this!" snarled Little Amby, shaking his skinny little fist over the side as the truck lurched toward the street. "You'll laugh on the other side of your mouth, Mr. Kelleher!"

CHAPTER XI.

Little Amby drove a smart buggy up to the curb in front of Steve Hilley's house. He was going to take Cissie Hilley to the club benefit at Goldfogle's Burlesque Theater. He had managed to meet Cissie, in his usual underhanded way, by calling upon Steve Hilley when he was out and being entertained by the pretty daughter during his pretended wait for her father. Little Amby was a young man who kept his own counsel; it would have gone against his grain to suggest to Steve Hilley frankly that he afford him an opportunity to meet Cissie. Tonight he was in evening dress—hired for one dollar from Frankenheim's Elite Par'ors—beneath a linen duster.

"I'll be right down!" called Cissie, leaning out to wave from the second floor.

Little Amby sat straight, holding the reins in his gloved hands over the back of the meek and world-weary steed from Halpin's Stables.

Out of the barber shop next the corner stepped a tall and wide-shouldered young man in a neat pepper-and-salt business suit. He strolled along the sidewalk toward the buggy, walking slowly and looking about him like a young man who has nothing on for the evening but is in a receptive mood. His heavy shoes were newly shined and his curly black hair, peeping from beneath the straw hat set slightly askew, was newly cropped. Upon his dark face, from black hair to shining blue chin, was an expression of tranquil readiness commingled of good nature and of confidence approaching recklessness.

When his dark-gray eyes lighted upon the elegant little man in the buggy the good nature went out of his face. He stalked stiffly to the side of the vehicle.

"Good evening, Mr. Kelleher," said Little Amby, smiling sweetly.

"Get down, you little rat," growled Jim Kelleher.

"Why—what's the idea, Mr. Kelleher?"

"Mr. Kelleher—be damned!" growled Jim, his face darkening another shade. "And you know what the idea is very well.

You said you'd make trouble for me, didn't you? And you're doing it, aren't you? You've held me up on that job until I may not be able to complete my contract. Not that I'm going to fall down on it—not me—not if I got to lick the whole Six Nations! And I'm going to lick the whole crooked crowd of you, do you hear? And I'm going to start with you—get down here and put up your hands!"

"I'll fight you," blustered Little Amby, his glances shooting about in search of a policeman. "I'll punch the fat head off you! You just wait here until I put this back up and I'll come back here and give you the finest pasting you ever had in your life. You don't need to think I'm afraid of you! You wait here, now, and——"

"I haven't got to wait," interposed Jim Kelleher, catching Little Amby by the leg and halting his attempt to drive off.

He began to pull and Little Amby saw that he would come to the ground asprawl. The fellow had the strength of a gorilla.

"I'll get down!" he shouted. "Don't try to run away, now! You just give me a fair chance to get on my feet down there, and——"

Meanwhile he was coming down. Jim Kelleher released his leg when his presence on the field of battle seemed assured and stepped back a pace. Little Amby fell on his feet and promptly put up his fists with great bravado, meanwhile quartering so as to get away from the wheel of the buggy and into a position whence he could bolt under the horse's belly.

"Give me room!" he shouted. "Don't crowd me, now! All I want is fair play!"

Cissie Hilley came out on the steps. She shrieked. Little Amby came out of his crouch at once and raised his open hand haltingly.

"There is a lady present," he said dignifiedly. "I would like to give you a good pasting, but under the circumstances I refuse to proceed. Don't think though that you will escape me the next time."

"This is a friend of mine," he said to Cissie, who had come hurrying to the sidewalk with sparkling eyes and an evident intention to pitch in for Little Amby. "Miss Hilley—Mr. Kelleher! We were just fooling."

"We were just joking, I guess," mumbled Jim Kelleher, grinning inanely under the bright eyes of Cissie. "I guess I wouldn't

have hit that little shrimp after all, but he got me awful sore—and I—was just fooling with him. We're great friends, as a matter of fact!"

"Are you ready to go?" asked Cissie, turning puzzledly to Little Amby.

"Quite ready!" agreed Little Amby, handing her into the buggy.

But now the grin left Jim Kelleher's features and their grimness returned. He had met his enemy and he was not going to see him drive gayly off.

"I'll go too," he said, stepping into the buggy. "There's something I got to discuss with you and I don't want to miss this chance. Or would you rather take it up with me right now?"

"Glad to have you," said Little Amby. "Get in!"

They drove off, sitting tight, with Miss Hilley between them.

"Look out!" cried Jim Kelleher, snatching the reins from Little Amby, who was a tyro at driving and whose mind was not on his work. He had run the buggy between a truck and a horse car. Jim Kelleher snatched the meek steed about and extricated the turnout expertly, meanwhile giving word for word to the angry driver of the car.

"Give me those reins!" barked Little Amby.

"No," said Cissie nervously. "Let Mr. Callahan drive! Callahan is the name, isn't it?"

"Kelleher," said the new driver, glad of the opportunity to look into her eyes. "Jim Kelleher. K-e——"

"Look out!" shouted Little Amby. "Look where you're driving, you big slob!"

"Excuse me, mister!" called Jim Kelleher, leaning out to smile and nod reassuringly at a frightened pedestrian. "What's that?—Look where I'm going?" Well, if you'd go where you're looking, you cockeye sleep-walker— No danger, Miss Hilley. I could drive this plug up that fellow's back and down the other side and never wake him up. The name is Kelleher. K-e——"

"Look out!"

"Aren't we awful cramped here?" suggested Jim, frowning at Little Amby. "Say, Hinkle, you'd better get out. You know you told me to remind you that you had to run over to the Six Nations to-night. It's up the next block. I'll let you out at the corner and we'll pick you up later."

"I don't have to go to the club!"

"Oh, yes, you *do!*" insisted Jim Kelleher, pulling into the sidewalk. "You told me not to let you forget it and I'm not letting you. I'll see you later about that matter we were discussing. Or we'll settle it right here and now! What do you say?"

He had a hold of Little Amby's off leg again. "Come on out, Hinkle!" he cried jovially.

"Go, if you must, Amby," said Cissie reprimandingly. "Don't quarrel with Mr. Kelleher on the street! Give me the tickets and I'll see you at the theater."

"All right," agreed Little Amby with a pale smile. "I'll go. Here's the tickets. I'll see you again, Kelleher."

"How strange he looked at you as he went away!" marveled Cissie.

"He'd have looked stranger if he hung around," said Jim Kelleher. "And where were you bound for, Miss Hilley?"

"To Goldfogle's Burlesque Theater. Here are three tickets—one for me, one for Amby, and one for my mother. My mother couldn't come. Maybe you would like to use this ticket, Mr. Kelleher? I'm sure Amby would be glad to have you."

"Tickled to death," grinned Jim. And he drove around to the theater and handed Miss Hilley out and gave the buggy into the charge of a lurking ragamuffin.

They went to their seats.

"Seems a friendly sort of audience," commented Jim, looking about.

There was nothing of the decorum of the ordinary audience about the theater this evening. It was filling solidly with the men of the Six Nations and their women and older children. Everybody seemed to know everybody else and they shouted greetings across the pit and hung over the balcony to throw programs and peanuts at friends below and quarreled loudly over seats; the eyes of all present shone kindly with sociability or with incipient drunkenness. In a stage box sat Steve Hilley for all the world to shout loyal messages to; he sat starchy and splendid in evening dress. Behind him were his wise men, equally rigid and radiant.

"Don't papa look grand!" whispered Cissie proudly.

"Your father is here?" said Jim, trying to follow her gaze. "What is this thing—an affair of the Elks or Masons? Why, it must be the Elks—there's one of our past

Exalted Rulers up there! I'm an Elk myself—*certainly* I am!"

"Don't you know? It's the benefit of the Six Nations!"

"The Six Nations!" repeated Jim startledly. "And so Steve Hilley over there is your father. Say, he does look snappy, don't he? Well they are a very decent-looking group, I'll say."

And they were a presentable crowd of American people. It is the misfortune of our system of government that it lends itself to the purposes of corrupt politicians, who secure the allegiance of honest men for lack of better leaders. We have in this country no class whose hereditary prerogative it is to govern and who govern as honorable men through sheer pride of class. They manage the business of government more honestly and efficiently in England, where an hereditary caste is born to rule. Democracy, no doubt, is worth its faults, but they are very grave faults. They will not be cured until we all take an interest in politics, in the artless phrase of Steve Hilley and Little Amby.

The curtain went up on an old-time burlesque show. Burlesque, even more than politics, has improved during the last thirty years. In those bad old days the acting consisted of an exhibition of balancing on the sheer edge of indecency. Daring lines and dances brought nervous shouts of laughter from the audience. Double meanings were spoken; the audience trembled for an instant and then clutched with gleeful shouts at the decent meaning, showing that they were well aware of the improper meaning by their undue excitement over a feeble joke. It wasn't a pleasant experience except for lovers of unhealthy excitement, and it wasn't a well-paying phase of the drama; Goldfogle was losing money; he was one of the first managers to put burlesque on its upward trend by cleaning it, cautiously and experimentally, of its more vulgar features.

The show this night was full of interpolated local allusions. Here is a sample, from the book:

IRISH COMEDIAN: I say, Dutchy, who was thot foin-looking gentleman with the bay window I seen you standing in front of the theayter with?

GERMAN COMEDIAN: Dot was mine friend, Judge Hellwell. He always got time for me.

IRISH COMEDIAN: Yis. He gave you thirty days wanst, didn't he? Hello, Steve!

GERMAN COMELIAN: Who iss dot Steve?

IRISH COMEDIAN: Thot's my friend, Steve Hilley! He came in here to look thim over.

GERMAN COMEDIAN: You mean he came in here to look them *under*, ain't it? (*pointing at the chorus ladies. Slapstick and back-flip by G. C.*)

Little Amby came in after the first half hour. He seemed to be in excellent humor, smiled amicably at Jim Kelleher, and went to explaining the proceedings on the stage to Cissie. She had never attended a burlesque show before and while her color was heightened by a puzzling phrase or two she was still enjoying the spectacle.

"Now, this," explained Little Amby, "is supposed to be the foyer of the Hotel Shady. Wait until that Irishman comes in to register! It's awfully funny. All those doors there with numbers on them are doors to the bedrooms. The Dutchman is in one of those rooms, and the Irishman's wife is in another. And in the middle of the night the Dutchman comes out and he doesn't see the Irishman standing by the desk and he begins to wander about. And then the Irishman's wife comes out of her room and begins to wander about and then they go back in the wrong rooms. And the Irishman gets——"

"But why don't he see the Irishman standing there?"

"Well, anyhow, he don't. See? That's the plot!"

"Oh."

"Mr. Kelleher. Mr. Kelleher. Mr. Kelleher," chanted an attendant, walking down the aisle

"Right here!" called Jim Kelleher; and he took the message.

"Sorry," he said, looking up from reading. "A fellow wants to see me outside."

"Too bad you got to run away, Kel," said Little Amby solicitously. "I hope to see you some more!"

"You're not such a bad little fellow after all," said Jim Kelleher, putting out his hand impulsively. He was touched by the little man's evident lack of malice. "If you're willing to call off your dogs, I don't know but what I'd take a fancy to you!"

"Don't mention it," said Little Amby, wringing his hand and looking straight into his eyes.

When Kelleher had gone Little Amby snuggled comfortably nearer Cissie and re-

sumed his explanation of the plot of the play.

Kelleher returned after ten minutes. He came slowly down the darkened aisle and let himself down into his seat.

"Oh, I'm so glad you didn't have to stay away, Mr. Kelleher!" exclaimed Cissie.

"So is Hinkle," said Jim. "Aren't you, Hinkle?"

"Why not?" said Little Amby in a flat tone.

"I'd give a hundred dollars to know who sent me that message," said Jim, speaking with difficulty. "If I was sure of the sneaking little rat——"

"Why, what is the matter, Mr. Kelleher?" asked Cissie alarmedly and she turned to peer at him. "Why, you look all dirty and messy!"

"There are others," said Jim, with a chuckle. "I went outside and a man beckoned me from down the block; and when I went down there three fellows jumped me from a hallway. Well, they jumped heavy and mighty near got me, but I made them jump off again. I'll bet I took the jump out of one of them, at any rate!"

And he held up a big hand, the knuckles of which were skinned and bleeding.

"How perfectly dreadful!" breathed Cissie. "Why didn't you call the police?"

"I did. I guess I called everybody I knew. But nobody came until the fun was over. Then the copper came. He said he was called around the corner to help a man that was being assaulted!"

He settled into his seat to glower at the stage.

The fun was growing fast and furious. The various doors of the Hotel Shady were giving up ladies in various stages of *deshabillé* and the audience was almost hysterical with embarrassment. Cissie had fastened her eyes on the back of the seat in front of her and was patently ill at ease as the revelations of the secrets of female attire grew more daring.

"Let's get out of here," grumbled Jim Kelleher, whom the presence of Cissie as a fellow spectator was rendering equally uncomfortable. "Do you want to go home, Miss Hilley?"

"Yes," said Cissie, rising angrily.

"Don't go yet!" counseled Little Amby. "The best part's coming now!"

"You should be ashamed to bring me here, Mr. Hinkle," said Cissie, turning her

stiffened back on him and following the tall form of Jim Kelleher.

"Who was that couple I saw walking out in the middle of the show?" demanded Steve Hilley when Little Amby saw him later in his saloon. "That was an insult to the actors, to walk right out on them like that!"

"That was your daughter Cissie, and that——"

"Cissie! What was she doing there?"

"Why, I brought her to see the show."

"Well, I suppose there's no harm in that," said Steve Hilley after a momentary pause.

"It wasn't her fault," Little Amby assured him. "She didn't ask to go. It was that big stiff Kelleher. You remember that fellow Kelleher, the contractor that we had trouble with? He got right up and said the show was rotten and asked Cissie to go home!"

Steve Hilley inhaled his cigar smoke and blinked. "He's not such a bad skate, that Kelleher," he said grudgingly. "There's worse than him, I guess, though I will admit to it he is a pretty bad one!"

"Was it a good show, deary?" asked Mrs. Hinkle drowsily when Little Amby knocked on her door to bid her good night.

"Well, I thought it was pretty good. It was just like all the others. But the girl I was with didn't think much of it."

"I wish you wouldn't run around with girls that know so much about shows!" called back Mrs. Hinkle primly. "Why can't you find some nice little girl to go around with that don't know so much?"

"Oh, you don't understand, mom."

"No, I suppose not. I don't know anything. That's right. Go ahead thinking you know more than your mother about girls and you'll be bringing home to me some rare old bird some day. Go to bed now!"

He went into his room and undressed and lay down to read the morning paper. After he had read with attention the first page and the sporting page he let the paper rest on his chest. He puzzled to recall any feature of the entertainment at the theater at which a sensible girl could have taken offense. He could recall nothing of the sort—it was just like every other burlesque show—and he decided that Cissie had seized a pretext to go home with Jim Kelleher.

She was crafty then and liked to flirt—like every other woman. Well, no harm in

that; he was craftier and he would manage her. That must have been a beautiful smack that "Bull" Lloyd hit Kelleher, to knock the big stiff off his pins! It must have been Bull that hit him, as the other two wouldn't hit a man who wasn't down. Cissie Hilley was the prettiest girl he had ever seen. She was—not like other girls.

There was something nice about her. If he had a girl like that—if he had—a wife—like that—

His mother, who slept badly on account of her fat, bent above him in the gray dawn. There was a smile on his hard little face. She went back to her own room and to her beauty sleep, comforted.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

Mr. McMorrow will have a short story about "Little Amby" in the next issue.



TAKING NO CHANCES

IT was at one of the busiest corners in downtown New York. The roar of the city was conquered by the fierce chorus of electric hammers and automatic drills at work on the construction of a skyscraper. Suddenly a shriek cut through all this pandemonium. An Irishman had fallen from the twelfth story and managed to stop his downward plunge by grasping a heavy wire that hung across the street.

"Hold on!" the workers in the street warned him. "Hold on till we get a blanket to catch you in!"

But the Irishman had other ideas.

"Shtand from under!" he shouted and dropped the remainder of the distance to the sidewalk.

Upon his return to consciousness in the hospital a few hours later he was asked why he had not held on to the wire until the blanket was brought.

"F'r the love o' Mike!" he explained. "I was afraid the wire wud break!"



THE SENATOR'S OFFER

AS a political campaigner the Honorable Thomas J. Heflin, United States senator from Alabama, is a prince, power and perfect. He thunders from the platform, gossips from house to house, bestows the paternal kiss upon the proud young father's first-born, compliments the ladies, and is the busy beaver with the courtly bow and the king of laughter with the side-splitting joke.

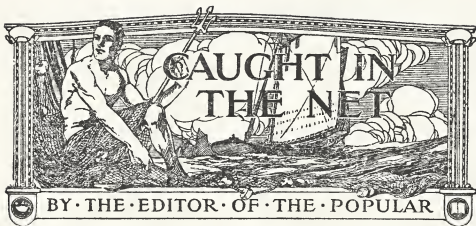
In his campaign for the Senate he covered the State making speeches and paying visits from house to house. One evening he opened a gate upon a rose-embowered walk and, resplendent in high hat and frock coat, was met by a diminutive but antagonistic dog. The little canine, barking in eight octaves, showed a decided intention to chew the legs of the Heflin trousers to a frazzle. His onslaughts yielded not at all to the Heflin campaign utterance.

At last the candidate was driven to the necessity of losing a large part of his trousers or kicking the dog. He chose to kick, which drew from the dog something new and bloodcurdling in the way of canine lamentation. At that sound there appeared on the porch a newly enfranchised woman. Mr. Heflin bowed deeply and spoke on a high note, trying to overcome with explanation the barking of the dog and the outcries of that unpledged voter.

"How dare you!" shrilled the lady. "My pet dog that wouldn't hurt a fly! You kicked him! You've killed him!"

"Madam," said the candidate with another bow, "if I've killed your dog I'll gladly replace him."

She drew herself up and eyed him with supreme and silent scorn for a full minute. "Humph!" she sniffed. "You flatter yourself!"



REVAMPING OLD KNOWLEDGE

DOCTOR COUÉ has caught our imaginations. He is the latest of a long line of preachers whose business is the restating of an ancient truth. Hailed as an inspired prophet of a new faith he is really nothing more than an able disciple of an ancient philosophy. Couéism is simply a new formula for the same basic truth upon which the other founders of faith-healing systems reared their creeds.

The truth is that every man can be his own Coué. Everybody recognizes the value of the "stiff upper lip." Couéism, Christian Science, New Thought—in so far as they are applied to the problem of bodily well-being—are merely comprehensive developments of the doctrine of the stiff lip. Admission of defeat begets defeat. Repudiation of disaster is in itself, as nearly every man has discovered from his own observation, a powerful reagent against disaster. The bowed head, the arched back, the shuffling step, the limp leg, the "what's the use" outlook are just as much noxious drugs to the physical system as any concoction of chemicals in the pharmacopia. The straight spine, the high chest, the brisk stride, the "better-next-time" attitude are manifest physical stimulants. Hopelessness is in itself a wasting malady and a consequent invitation to disease. Get rid of hopelessness and you are rid of one sickness at least, and consequently stronger by just that much to fight off other sicknesses.

The reason everybody isn't well—since faith healing is such a simple matter—is, firstly, that there are some diseases, in our humble opinion, that are more powerful even than faith; and, secondly, because few people have self-starting imaginations. When the average man gets down he considers only the obvious, practical methods of getting up again. It seldom occurs to him that the mere pretending to himself that he isn't down at all will go as far, perhaps, to helping him up as any other circumstance. Yet we all have heard of the fellow whose well-being is ascribed by his friends and followers to the fact that "he never knows when he's licked." And most of us like to delude ourselves that we are that same fellow.

Probably we are—more or less. There are very few men, as a matter of fact, who haven't, once or oftener, repudiated a licking. It is when a man is not just licked but when he is badly and hopelessly beaten and still fights back that his mettle is tried. And most of us have been through that at least once in our lives. And we didn't know it at the time, but when we came up from the beating and asked for more, and grinned and took it, we were just as much the disciples of Doctor Coué as if we had been reading his book all our lives. Only our imaginations didn't see what was at the bottom of our regeneration and reduce the spontaneous philosophy

that brought us through the siege to a formula for use in all crises, big and little. We didn't build a system and launch a creed with the materials of experience.

That is all, as we see it, that Doctor Coué has done, more than any average man. He practices tenacity of spirit consciously and consistently. The man in the street practices it unconsciously and infrequently.

Doctor Coué's system has undoubtedly helped a great many people. It is probably a good system every way. The danger in it consists in the propensity of the public to see it as something entirely new and miraculous and to accept it as an infallible panacea for every kind of human ill. It isn't infallible—cannot be. It isn't miraculous and it isn't new. It is as old as philosophy itself. The healing virtues of faith have been accepted and taught for thousands of years, under one guise or another. Faith is a mighty physician—no doubt of it. But there are times, to our way of thinking, when all the faith of the ages isn't worth the kindly ministrations of the good old family doctor.

HAVE YOU GOT YOUR OWN NUMBER?

WHEN we put that question to you we are not speaking in the slang sense but in an altogether different vein. We are tackling you in the Pythagorean sense. If that means nothing in your young life let us at once get down to cases, for report has come to us that people may reshape their lives, even control their destiny, by applying the science of numbers to themselves.

Pythagoras, who is responsible for this system, was a Greek philosopher who lived some six hundred years before the Christian era. For a long time he studied in the mystical East and is thought to have learned his theory of numbers there. Pythagoras was not a visionary dreamer but a hard-headed mathematician whose contributions to geometry and algebra were acknowledged to be of first importance. Probably because of his practical ability, his occult teaching of the hidden power of numbers made a greater impression on his contemporaries. At any event he taught that through the understanding and manipulation of numbers the prophecy of future happenings might be achieved and the development of individual characteristics controlled.

For instance, the effect of the occult influence of numbers in a man's name would have a permanent effect upon the life and fate of the individual bearing it. Thus, supposing your name were Peter, and your ambition was to be an architect, in all probability your name, when taken with other numerical factors, like the date of your birth, the month and the year, ought to have been Paul for the complete success of your career. After considering all the aspects of your birth and the mathematical vibration of your associates and surroundings the Pythagoreans would advise a change in your given name.

The Pythagoreans held numbers to be of divine origin, the very substance of all created things. Each number holds some particular virtue. Certain fundamentals were discovered in odd and even numbers, in square numbers and so forth. They held that music and harmony were mathematical elements in vibration. So every number had its subtle, potent vibration on life and achievement. Numbers, it will be recalled, have played an important and mystical rôle in all religions.

According to the Pythagorean theory, the letters in your name, your city, in the month, in the day, et cetera, vibrate mystically, and naturally produce harmony or discord in your life. The whole "theory of numbers," as evolved by the Greek mathematician mystic, is not known, his work coming down to us only in fragments. But the Pythagorean alphabet was figured in the following way:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

It is interesting to note, incidentally, that *vibration*, the keystone of the Pythagorean system, is the latest and most startling field of modern scientific investigation.

SAFER AND SAFER EVERY DAY

IT is the aim of the National Safety Council, representing 4,000 employers and 7,000,000 workers, to have a program of safety taught in the public schools. The president of the council is Marcus A. Dow, director of safety of the New York Central lines. At the last congress of safety men, held in Detroit, 3,000 safety engineers were brought together on a coordinated program. The resolution to aim at having safety taught in the public schools was reached after a meeting of the executive committee of the National Safety Council in New York City.

The safety movement has long since passed the crusade stage and is now a practical constructive movement. The right to work and to mingle in public places without injury is the right of every citizen of this country. The council is working to promote a national spirit which will make the recognition of the right paramount in the minds of all people.

Besides getting ready to enter actively on a program of teaching safety in the public schools, the council is preparing a special campaign directed at automobile accidents and the extension of local safety councils. There are already forty of the latter in existence.

Judging from the number of motor-car accidents, we need not forty but four thousand safety councils.

THE BUSINESS OF FLYING

FEW people realize what is at the bottom of the "flying hazard" that has given aviation a sinister hue in the eyes of the general public and raised the insurance rates on the lives of aviators to prohibitive proportions. There is a mistaken idea abroad that most aviation accidents are the result of faulty equipment—imperfect motors, poor plane construction and general inferiority of design and material that only greater knowledge and more experience applied to the building of aircraft will eliminate.

The hazard of flight to-day, contrary to general lay opinion, lies far more in the uncertainty of the human factor in flight than in the insecurity of the mechanical element. There are not nearly as many sound and safe air pilots as there are reasonably secure types of aircraft. It is entirely safe to say that ninety out of every hundred airplane accidents since the war have been easily avoidable and were due more to the incompetence or the rashness of the pilots involved than to any grave defect in the airplanes concerned.

The trouble with the business of flying is that so few of the men who engage in it really regard it as a business. For their attitude the public, unwittingly but none the less effectively, is considerably to blame. The public still sees the aviator in the same class with the circus-stunt thriller. At best it looks on flying as a hare-brained adventure. The popular conception of the aviator puts him in a category midway between the death-defying acrobat and the bona-fide hero.

Having this popular characterization of himself to live up to it is small wonder that the aviator hesitates to disappoint his audience. The result is that he is constantly tempted to take absurd chances. And every once in so often he succumbs to temptation. The next morning his obituary appears headlined on the front pages and the public shakes its head gravely and resolves anew to keep its feet firmly planted on the ground.

When the public and the flyers themselves decide to change their point of view and concede that flying is a serious business accidents will decrease. Pilots must come to feel, just as sea captains feel, that the loss of a ship is a professional disgrace and that the running of undue risks for the sake of display constitutes not a demonstration of nerve but a deplorable exhibition of bad judgment. And if the public would censure the hapless airman whose pride has gone before a tumble, instead of commiserating him and flocking to congratulate him on his miraculous escape, pilots would very soon come to the safe and sane attitude toward their vocation.

Furthermore, if the epidemic of aerial tragedies is to be checked something must

be done in a legislative way to enforce professional competency before a pilot is allowed to assume the controls of a flying craft. The day is over when a complacent government can disregard with impunity the problems of air navigation and say to the man who wants to fly, "Your risk—break your fool neck if you want to." Airmen should be taken, by law, out of the haphazard adventure class and forced to demonstrate undeniable competency before being permitted the exercise of their profession. And mere ability to drive an airplane under ideal conditions ought not to constitute of itself a test of competency. Aviators themselves know that they cannot make up for the hard knocks of experience by mere theoretical proficiency in flying technique. No aerial tenderfoot should be left alone at the controls until he has passed a period of apprenticeship—just as sea captains and railway engineers serve apprenticeships—learning the lessons that only experience will teach, under the guidance of seasoned flyers. There are too many airmen to-day whose experience totals something under a hundred hours of actual time in the air and less than a year in close contact with practical flying activities.

But the chief hazard is irresponsibility rather than incompetency. The airplane is a machine. No machine is immune from breakdowns. The secret of avoidance of air accidents is in allowing a double margin of safety against inevitable breakdowns. Careful flyers are never taken by surprise when the motor fails and are rarely injured. Reckless flyers are frequently caught napping. Any seasoned and serious airman will tell you that the taking of due precaution renders the airplane as safe as the automobile but that in reckless hands it is as treacherous as the mad elephant and twice as deadly.

A WORD OF WARNING TO GOLFERS

PERHAPS golfers already know, through the steady mounting in the price of their clubs, that "something must be done." And that something, we are in position to tell those concerned, is the conservation of our hickory trees. They are being rapidly destroyed by two "bugs"—an implacable six-legged borer and the two-legged golf enthusiast. But in the race for destruction of our hickories the six-legged fellow has the two-legged one beaten to a standstill.

The hickory is one of the most American of trees, not one of its genus being found indigenous to any other land. It used to be one of our most abundant trees. We ought to make every effort to keep the grand old native with us. It might not be a bad idea for the golfers to open war upon the borers, for one thing, and for another to agitate the motion to plant two hickories in the place of each tree felled to manufacture golf sticks. Let every golf club in the country adopt at its next meeting of the board of directors a resolution to look after the hickory trees in the land of their choice. And perhaps they might go so far as to plant a few and, as it were, raise their own golf sticks!

Otherwise, within another decade, or even less time, there will be no more hickories.



POPULAR TOPICS

THE comparative esteem in which Americans hold shoe leather and the flivver as a means of getting there and back is shown plainly by the fact that the annual production of the boot and shoe industry is valued at \$1,100,000,000 and of the automotive industry at \$2,865,000,000.



AMERICAN industry each year places more dependence on science for help in solving its problems. The chamber of commerce of the United States tells us that American manufacturers now spend seventy million dollars a year on scientific research work, this sum being divided about equally between laboratory research work and experimental and development work in manufacturing plants. The return

for this expenditure is a saving to American industry estimated at a half billion dollars a year.



MILLIONS IN MOTORS" was the title of a story of the automobile industry that we published recently. There was nothing misleading about that title. Two of the richest men in America can thank the automobile for their present plethoric pocketbooks. Henry Ford made his millions in motors and John D. Rockefeller got a good part of his out of the stuff that makes them run. The automotive and petroleum industries are the only two that are in the two-billion-dollar-a-year class.



SPEAKING of motor cars, we wonder what the Syracuse, New York, man who swapped his wife for a flivver thought of his bargain after he had paid a few gasoline bills, attempted to argue with a traffic cop, forgot that even Henry Ford's masterpiece has to have a drink of oil once in a while to keep it in good humor, and tried to crank up the old bus on a cold morning.



ANTITOBACCO enthusiasts please note and ponder carefully: Captain George Finch, a member of the Mount Everest expedition said in a recent lecture that smoking cigarettes made breathing much easier at high altitudes.



TOBACCO—we think—is one of Nature's greatest blessings, and now that the ladies have succeeded in having themselves lowered to an equality with men we suppose they have as much right to be blessed as the rest of us. But we do wish that they would buy their smokes in shops of their own.



THE other day we stepped into a tobacco store on New York's mainest Main Street to buy a supply of pipe fuel. At the counter stood two ladies, both obviously approaching middle age. One of them was "shopping" for a package of cigarettes. While several male customers spun coins noisily on the glass show case and tried everything else they knew to get action the shop's three clerks tried frantically to find a brand that would suit their woman customer. Before they succeeded the revenue stamps of six packages had been broken and the cigarettes examined closely. The lady's system of judging tobacco was highly original. It was to take a cigarette daintily between the first and second fingers of her right hand, hold the hand aloft and gaze critically on the effect, meanwhile chatting to her companion about her "taste" in tobacco. The final result was the loss of several masculine tempers and a sale amounting to sixty cents.



DOGS are getting some of the benefits of modern surgery. In California blood transfusion from the veins of another dog saved the life of a Boston terrier suffering from shock and loss of blood from an operation made necessary by the fact that while eating ice cream the animal became too enthusiastic and swallowed two spoons. Both dogs recovered.



SOME people will think that this was too much fuss about a mere dog. We don't agree with them. We do agree with the fellow who writes the editorials for the Grand Rapids *Herald*, who says: "Every dog taken into a home as a pet must justify itself to assure itself a pillow in the corner and food. That isn't always true of humans. When you see a man on the street you can't always be sure he has earned the right to exist." He's dead right! There is many a self-approving citizen who would be decidedly out of luck if some one had to buy him a license tag; or if he was taken to the pound and had to wait for some one to pay a fee to get him out.



The Garden of God

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Blue Lagoon," "Picaroons," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

They were dead! Northward from the island home, where, as children, they had been cast up, where they had grown to maturity, had loved and mated, they drifted to meet Lestrangle. For years he had sought them in every port of the seven seas, Dick, his son, and Emmeline, his niece. And now he had found them, drifting in a dinghy on the bosom of the Pacific, sleeping happily the eternal sleep. Mysteriously they had been sent to meet him, and in their dead arms they brought him their little son—alive. What had killed them Lestrangle never knew. A branch studded with red berries—possibly poisonous—was with them in the battered dinghy. Perhaps that was the answer. At least they had passed happily, had dropped softly to sleep, and never wakened. Of suffering they showed no sign. That comforted Lestrangle. That and an occult presentiment that in some form or fashion he should see them again, should talk with them on the lotus-haunted island of the southern seas, where they had lived in happiness and innocence, alone and remote from the world. Their bodies were dropped to rest in the cool depths of the Pacific. And the *Raratonga* held south again, with one more passenger—Lestrangle's grandchild, little Dick, the island-born two-year-old. Lestrangle was going to his rendezvous with Dick and Emmeline, on their island, "The Garden of God." It lifted from the sea at last, a fairy dimesme of dreams, an emerald jewel in a shield of burnished sapphire. And here the *Raratonga* left them, Lestrangle, little Dick, and the sailor, Jim Kearney, who stayed to watch over the broken old man and the helpless foundling of the sea. A twelve-month passed, while Lestrangle waited the promised coming of his children, and Kearney counted the days to the return of the *Raratonga*. Little by little the truth dawned on Lestrangle. He had met the children, indeed. He had talked with them—in the person of little Dick. But the children themselves, in their separate forms, as he had known them, would never come to him this side the grave. His health began to fail. He grew feeble. And on a day he wandered into the island groves and fell asleep for all time. Kearney and the child waited, but he did not come back. Neither did the *Raratonga*.

(A Four-Part Story—Part II.)

CHAPTER XIV.

OUT OF THE GLOOM.

GOD bless my soul!" cried Mr. Kearney. "Come in! What are you doin' there? Get an oar over if you can—get an oar over I tell ye."

It was three weeks or so after the departure of Lestrangle. Kearney, busy over something near the house and looking up had caught sight of Dick.

Dick had got into the dinghy, untied her and pushed out with the boat hook. That the tide was on the ebb didn't matter to Dick.

Hanging over the stern and pretending to fish, Kearney's voice had roused him and he stood now balancing himself and considering the situation created by his own act.

A little over three and a half years of age, he was as strong and big as a child of five

but he was neither big nor strong enough to man the sculls and the dinghy was drifting toward the cape of wild coconuts beyond which lay the lagoon stretch reaching to the break and the sea. Then attending to Mr. Kearney's directions he got a scull over on the port side, got it into the cup of the rowlock and still standing up tried to pull, making a terrible mess of the business.

"God's truth!" cried Kearney, "you've done it now. Pull it in, that ain't no good. You're getting her farther out." He came running along the bank to the little cape hoping the boat would drift close enough for him to catch it by the gunnel. He couldn't swim.

Dick had pulled the scull in and was standing, showing no sign of fear, as the dinghy which had twisted sideways a bit owing to the efforts with the scull altered its position and came along, bow on, nearing the cape now but at least a yard too far away to be seized.

"Boat huk!" cried Kearney, "stick out the boat huk. Lord alive, look slippery!"

Before the words were spoken Dick had grasped the idea. He seized the boat hook, raised it aloft with a mighty effort and as the dinghy closed with the cape let the end drop into the hands of the sailor.

Kearney drew the boat to the bank. Then getting into the little craft he took the sculls and rowed back.

He neither scolded nor shook the child as another might have done. Dick had acted so sensibly and so pluckily that the sailor had no heart to "be harsh with him" but the incident had a profound effect upon the mind of Kearney and the future of Dick.

The question "what would have happened to the little devil if he'd gone drifting off" suggested another question to the mind of the sailor. The question what would happen to the child if he, Kearney, were drifted off in the dinghy or if he went west suddenly like Lestrage.

He knew himself to be in full health and strength. All the same the question presented itself and made him consider it.

He pictured to himself Dick starving to death in the midst of plenty and unpleasant as the picture was it gave him something to think about and something to do. The whole thing was a godsend in a way to Kearney, for the vanishing of Lestrage had begun to weigh on his mind. If he had seen

Lestrage drop dead and had buried him it would not have been nearly so bad; it was the thought of him lying somewhere in those woods, unburied, just as he was, that weighed on him.

The thought poisoned the groves, it maybe would have poisoned the lagoon and reef only for Dick.

That evening an hour or so before sunset he took the child out in the boat.

"Now," said Kearney, "I'm goin' to teach you how to scull if you ever get adrift again."

He drew in the sculls and then put one over the stern, resting it in the notch in the transom, and began to instruct his pupil how to scull a boat with a single oar.

Dick watched attentively, and then the sailor, with one hand on the oar, let his pupil grasp it to show him how it was done. The whole business was hopeless, for the child had neither the height nor strength for the work, though he had the spirit. But Kearney was not the man to cast cold water on a pupil. "That's grand," said he. "Couldn't be doin' it better meself—that's the way we do it."

"Lemme—lemme," cried Dick, trying to push the other aside and get the whole business in his own hands and nearly losing the scull when he did.

"Aye," said Kearney, recovering it, "I'll let you when you're a bit bigger—there now, get hold of it and maybe I'll make you a little one to-morrow you can get a proper grip of. Now get forward and play with the boat huk—that's more your size."

Next morning Kearney, pursuing his educational course, made Dick light the fire. Tried to, at all events. Stanistreet had left two tinder boxes with them and a supply of flints, also matches, but the matches had almost given out and as Kearney was an expert in the old method, he generally, now, used the flint and steel. Dick, gravely striking away with the flint, made a poor hand of the business, though he seemed to enjoy it and it took two to do the business at last. All the same it was a beginning—and something new to do. There was lots to be done in the ordinary way of life between fishing and cooking and what not but it had grown monotonous from repetition. Teaching Dick gave everything a new tinge and supplied an impetus that was beginning to fail.

Then after breakfast Kearney bethought

him of the little paddle he had promised to make.

He had no wood to make it of and the problem of what to do gave him a comfortable half hour's meditation over his pipe till he solved it by rooting out the saw and sawing off one of the raillike branches of a dwarf tree that grew near the water.

Here was a piece of straight wood, eight inches thick and over four feet long. It only wanted thinning and shaping, and with a knife in his hand, down he sat, Dick disposed before him in various postures as the work went on, sometimes standing, sometimes kneeling or sitting—always absorbed, sometimes helping.

The feature that was beginning to strike out individually in the child was his mouth. Dick was a nose breather and only opened his mouth to eat and sometimes to talk in two or three-word sentences. You could chase him round the sward and his way of breathing would be just the same, and, like the red Indians, when he laughed he rarely opened his lips. It was a beautiful mouth, firm, well curved and showing the dawn of decision upon it.

"Hold it tight now," said Mr. Kearney and he gave one end of the piece of branch to Dick.

"Am," said Dick.

He held it while the man with the knife attacked the bark, the pungent smell of the wood filling the air.

"That's the way of it," said Mr. Kearney, talking as he worked. "Off with the bark first and then we'll shape it. That'll do, I can hold it myself now." He continued to work and Dick to watch. Then getting tired of the monotony of the business Dick sat down. Presently, folding his hands in his lap, one of his moody fits came on him, his eyes wide-pupiled seemed contemplating things at a vast distance and Kearney happening to glance up and notice his condition, called to mind what Lestrangle had said about the child taking after the mother when he was quiet. He had often noticed the thing before, but now from what Lestrangle had said it seemed to the simple mind of Kearney that Dick as he sat there was more like a little girl than a boy, that the "mother in him was coming out too much."

But Kearney as he worked over the paddle had other things to think of beside Dick. The tobacco was showing signs indicating that it would not last forever and the pipe

he was smoking was, so to speak, on its last legs. Stanistreet had left him two beautiful new American briars of the sort they used to sell in Frisco in those days, ornately mounted with chased silver. They had been given to Stanistreet in a moment of expansion by a rich and bibulous friend. The sailor who was mostly a cigar smoker had never used them and as a parting gift had presented them to Kearney.

"There you are, Jim," said he. "They'll last you till we come back. No use having tobacco and running short of pipes."

The sailor had used them but could never take to them. They didn't smoke right. The old wooden pipe he had brought off from the *Raratonga* was always sweet as a nut, never got plugged, was always cool and "fitted his mouth." Now it was cracking all down one side and might go any time. It was like contemplating the death of a wife.

Then there was the bother about Lestrangle. It had only just come to him that supposing by any chance the *Raratonga* were to turn up, months overdue as she was, might they think by any chance there had been foul play and that he had done Lestrangle in?

He spent half the morning working over the paddle and later that day, urged by the spirit of restlessness, he determined on an expedition over to the eastern side of the island in search of bananas. He could have gone in the dinghy or have taken his way along the lagoon bank but at the last moment he decided to make a short cut through the woods, taking Dick along with him.

They started, taking their way through the trees on the side of the sward opposite to the house, Kearney leading. The trees were not dense and the wind from the sea stirred their fronds and branches, bringing with it the murmur of the reef. The twilight was alive with dancing lights and sun sparkles moving as the foliage stirred to the breeze and now and then as they passed along a bird resting on some branch would take flight with the sound of a fan flirted open.

Then came some giant trees with trunks buttressed like the matamata. They stood in two rows, making an alley across which swung cables of liantasse powdered here and there with the starlike blossoms of some lesser vine and here and there orchids like vast butterflies and birds in arrested flight.

The trees like the pillars of a cathedral, the twilight and the incense-like odors of tropical flowers gave to this place a solemnity and character all its own. Lestranger, in his wood wanderings, had found it out and had often come here to meditate and dream and sometimes forget, for here the great trees cast their presence as well as their shadow on a man's soul. Halfway down this alley Kearney halted.

A breath of wind came stealing toward him stirring the tendrils of the iantasse and bearing with it suddenly an odor of corruption from the flower-decked gloom ahead.

He stood just as though a bar had been placed across his path, then taking the child by the hand he turned back.

CHAPTER XV,

KATAFA.

Standing on the summit of Palm Tree Island and gazing southwest one saw above the horizon line something that was not land; the sky just then altered in color as though dimmed by a finger print and sometimes, just before sunset, this mysterious spot in the sky took on a vague glow.

Any old South Sea man would have known at once that this spot was the mirror blaze from a great lagoon reflected in the sky. Kearney recognized the fact at once when he saw it. "There's a big low island somewheres down there," had been his verdict, and he was right.

Karolin was the name of this atoll island. Even the whalers called it by its native name instead of dubbing it with some outlandish term of their own after their custom with islands not on the chart. But they never entered the lagoon. The place had a bad name, wood and water being scarce and the natives untrustable.

But the birds of Palm Tree cared nothing for the scarcity of wood or water or the trustability of the natives, and the great gulls, when fancy took them, would spread their wings for the south thinking little of the journey of fifty miles. League after league they would lay behind them with nothing in view but the blaze of the sea till like a trace of pale smoke the birds of Karolin showed circling in the sky. Then the line of the reef sent its murmur to meet them, but unheeding reef or surf they would pass over to poise above the lagoon before slanting down to rest and fish.

The lagoon was forty miles in circumference and the containing reef nowhere higher than six feet; standing on the reef you could not see the opposite shore except when mirage lifted it showing across the great pond brimming with light a line dotted with palm clumps. There was no water source on Karolin, only ponds cut in the coral and filled by the rains; no taro, only puraka; no breadfruit; coconuts, puraka, pandanus fruit and fish were the main support of the inhabitants and though Palm Tree with all its vegetation lay within reach they never went there for food.

The fishing canoes in the bad seasons when fish were poisonous at Karolin would push out with the northward running current and sometimes even skirt the reef of the northern island, but they never landed and for three reasons. The high island with its dense trees and narrow lagoon was an abomination to the minds of the atoll-bred people. In the remote past for some reason they had emigrated en masse but had returned in less than three months broken in spirits and yearning for the great spaces and the sun blaze on the lagoon. Again, years ago there had been a tribal war and the remnants of the defeated tribe had made north and had been pursued and killed on the beach of Palm Tree to a man and their ghosts were supposed still to haunt the beach; lastly, Palm Tree, though invisible from Karolin by direct vision was sometimes at long intervals raised by the witchery of mirage, showing as a picture in the sky, and an island that could raise itself like this was a place to be avoided. Katafa had only seen this vision twice though she was thirteen years of age.

Eleven years ago a ship had come into the lagoon of Karolin, a Spanish ship, the *Pablo Poirez*, Spanish owned and out of Valparaiso. Valores was the captain's name and he had his wife and little daughter on board, a child two years old named Chita.

He came in for water. There had been a drought and the wells of Karolin were low and Le Juan the sorceress and rain expert in a temper, and Uta Matu, the chief man of the northern tribe, spoiling for a fight. When the wells were low there was always trouble on Karolin, offerings to the god Nanawa, rejuvenations of old vendettas and the general nerve tension and gloom of a people who feel that the fates are against them.

In the middle of all this the Spaniards came on shore with their water barrels and were met by Le Juan and Uta Matu who barred the way to the wells only to be pushed aside by Valores and his men. In a moment the beach was in a turmoil, daggers and shark's-teeth spears were whipped from beneath mats and from clefts in the rock; attacked on all sides and with the fury of a typhoon the Spaniards fell butchered like sheep—slaughtered to a man.

Then the canoes put out for the ship, Uta Matu boarding her to starboard and his son Laminai to port. There were six Spaniards on board. They had knocked the shackle off the anchor chain and were trying to handle the sails, forgetting that the tide was flooding and that the wind was coming from the break—working like maniacs and falling like cattle before the spearmen. The wife of Valores fell defending her child; stricken on the back with a coral-headed club she fell with it in her arms covering it so that they had to turn her over to tear it from her.

Now the ship, free of the anchor, had been drifting with the flood and wind, and just as Laminai was holding the child aloft before dashing it on the deck the keel took a submerged reef that rose from the lagoon floor just there, the shock made him slip on the blood-soaked deck and as he fell Uta caught the child.

His blood lust was satiated and the gods had spoken, at least so it seemed to Uta Matu and when Laminai got on his feet again and tried to seize his prey he received a clip on the side of the head from the old man's right fist, strong to save as to kill.

But the chief had reckoned without Le Juan. The sight of the rescued Chita filled the priestess of Nanawa with the most dismal forebodings. It was a girl child, belonging to the murdered *papalagi* whose spirits, through it, would surely find revenge. Le Juan, despite her devotion to sorcery, or maybe because of it, was a very clever woman. She foresaw in the growing up and mating of this alien with some young man of the tribe danger to the people of Karolin. It might be that the ghosts of the murdered ones would work through her and the children she bore, Le Juan could not tell. She only knew that there was danger in the thing and that night, squatting in Uta Matu's house while the rest of the tribe lay about on the beach drunk with carnage and kava, she so worked on the wind of the

chief that he was about to assent to the strangling of Chita when, of a sudden, a noise filled the air; first a whisper, then a murmur, then a roar—the rain—the long-deferred rain beating the lagoon to foam and washing the coral free of bloodstains.

"How now about the ill luck?" asked Uta Matu. "The child is lucky, it has brought us rain. Take her and do what you will with her, put spells upon her or what you like, but if you injure one hair of her head I will have you choked with a wedge of raw paraka and I will cast thy body to the sharks, Le Juan."

"As you please," said the old woman. "I will do what I can."

She did.

She christened Chita, Katafa, or the frigate bird, a creature associated with wanderings and great distances, and then gradually and year by year she isolated Katafa from the tribe, absolutely and in all but speech.

Now, how can you isolate a person from their fellows so that while living, talking, eating and moving among them they are as much apart as though ringed round with a barrier of steel? It seems impossible but it was not impossible to Le Juan. She imposed upon Chita the rarest of all the forms of taboo, *taminan*. There were men and women on Karolin tabooed from touching the skin of a shark, from eating certain forms of shellfish and so forth and so on, but the terrible taboo of *taminan* debarred its victims from touching any human creature or being touched.

From her earliest infancy the mind of the Spanish child had been worked upon by Le Juan until the taboo had taken a firm hold and become part and parcel of her brain processes and evasion an instantaneous reflex act. You might suddenly have put out your hand to grasp or touch Katafa—you would have touched nothing but air. Like an expert swordsman she would have evaded you if only by the twentieth part of an inch. To understand the tremendous grasp of this thing upon the mind it is enough to say that had she wished you to touch her, desired with all her heart that you should touch her, wish or desire would have been fruitless before the impassable barrier erected by the subliminal mind.

On no grown person could the taboo of *taminan* be imposed, only on the plastic mind of childhood could it obtain its grip strong as hypnotism and lasting till death.

At six years of age Le Juan's work was accomplished and Katafa was immune, isolated forever from her kind. The work had been helped by the fact that every creature on Karolin had avoided her, but on the day when Le Juan proclaimed her free she was taken into the tribe. Men, women and children no longer held apart and she mixed with them, played with them, fished with them, talked with them, a ghost in everything but speech.

CHAPTER XVI.

BLOWN TO SEA.

This evening just before sunset Katafa was standing on the beach waiting for Taiofa, the son of Laminai. They were going out to fish for palu beyond the reef.

Straight as a dart; wearing a girdle of dracæna leaves, she stood, her eyes sweeping the lagoon water where the gulls were fishing.

Near by some native girls were helping to unload a canoe that had come over from the southern beach, and as they talked and laughed over the work, flat-nosed and plain, muscular and full of the joy of life, they formed the strangest contrast to the Spanish girl in the dawn of her beauty. Slim, graceful as a young palm tree, Katafa stood separate from the others in spirit as in body.

The work of Le Juan had been well done and the result was amazing, for Katafa from all other human beings stood apart ringed by the mystic charm of *taminan*.

One might have said of her that here was a living, breathing human being who yet was divorced from humanity, every movement of her body, her glance, her laughter, spoke of a spirit irresponsible, thoughtless, light as the spirit of a bird. She who touched nothing but the food she ate, the ground she trod on and the water she swam in, who had never grasped a living thing since the tragedy of the Spanish ship so long ago had seemingly failed to find the hold upon life given to the least of the Kanaka girls among whom she had grown up, creatures almost animal yet human in affection and tied together by the common bonds of joy and hope and fear. One of the strangest effects of the terrible law under which Katafa lived was her insensibility to fear.

The natural law of compensation gave to the isolated one fearlessness and the power

to stand alone, and the one who had no use for a soul the lightness of spirit and wariness of a bird, the irresponsibility of the flower moved by the wind. Katafa, well was she named as she stood there, her mind roving with the frigate birds across the sunset-tinged waters of the lagoon.

"Oh he, Katafa!"

It was Taiofa, sixteen years of age and strong as a grown man. He was carrying a big basket containing food and several young drinking coconuts, the lines and bait; the canoe that was to take them lay on the beach, the water washing its stern, and between them they put off, Taiofa running up the sail to catch the favoring westerly wind.

Katafa steered with a paddle, the tide was running out and they cleared the break just as the setting sun touched the far-off invisible western reef.

Out here they met the swell and with the wind blowing up against the night and the last of the sunset on the sail they steered for the fishing bank and the forty-fathom water that lay three miles to the north-east.

The water off Karolin is a mile deep, then the soundings vary toward the bank, the floor of the sea rising in terracelike steps to within forty fathoms of the surface.

Neither Katafa nor her companion spoke, or only a word now and then; steering an outrigger curve requires attention, for if the outrigger dips too deep there may be disaster. As for Taiofa, he was busy overhauling the tackle, the anchor which was simply a chipped lump of coral, and the mooring rope.

The Spanish ship had been a blessing to Karolin; before burning and scuttling the natives had looted her, the rope Taiofa was handling had been made from part of her running rigging unwoven and retwisted, the fishing hooks beaten out of some of her metal. Having placed everything in order he crouched, brooding, his eyes fixed on the last tinge of sunset.

A three-day-old moon hung, half tilted, like a boat rising on a steep wave, its light trickling on the swell and turning the outrigger spume to silver, a last fishing gull passed them making for the land, and now, as though assured of their position by chart, compass and sounding lead, the sail was holed and the anchor dropped, the canoe riding to it bow to swell.

While the boy fished, the girl watched, a heavy maul beside her for the stunning of the palu when caught; from far away and borne on the wind came the voice of the reef, a confused indefinite murmur from the vastness of the night answered only by the slap of the water on the planking as the northward running current strained the anchor line.

An hour passed during which the fisherman hauled in a few small schnapper while the girl, perched now on the pole of the outrigger, watched the seas go by flowing up out of the night ahead and passing in long rhythmical columns of swell, star-shot and rippling on the anchor rope; the schnapper lay where they were cast like bars of silver leaping now and again to life, while on the wind the invisible beach of Karolin still sent the murmur of the breakers on the coral.

"The palu are not," said Taiofa, "but who knows, they may come before dawn."

"Better than not at all," said the girl, "but it is not the palu. Oh he, Taiofa, we should have waited for a bigger moon."

The fisherman made no reply and the girl relapsed into herself in a silence broken only by the far-off beach.

Hours passed and then at last came the reward, the line ran out and the boy, calling to the girl to steady the canoe, hauled while the great fish fought, now darting ahead till the bow overran the anchor rope, now zigzagging astern. Now they could see it fighting below the surface and now thrashing the starlit water to foam; it was nearly alongside and Taiofa was shouting to his companion to get ready to strike when of a sudden the night went black, the squall was on them.

They had not noticed it coming up from the south, the smash of the rain and the rush of the wind took them like the stroke of a hand.

Taiofa, dropping the line which ran out, flung his weight to the outrigger side while the girl, instinctively and at once, dropped the maul and sprang aft to the steering paddle. Her thought was to keep the canoe head to sea, but the anchor rope had parted and the canoe instead of broaching to was running in some mysterious manner before the squall stern on to the leaping swell.

It was the palu. The end of the line was tied to the bow and the great fish driving north was towing them.

Then with a last roaring cataract of rain

the squall passed and the stars appeared showing the tossing sea and Taiofa gone! He had been on the forward outrigger pole and the sea had taken him leaving neither trace nor sound. The canoe had possibly overrun him, she did not know nor did she care. Taiofa was less to her than an animal and the devouring sea was feeling for her to devour her.

Something hit her like the stroke of a whip. It was the sheet of the mat sail that had broken loose. She seized it, fastened it, and then as the sail filled before the wind, steered. The palu, feeling the slackening of the line, made a dash at right angles to their course, she saw the line tauten out to starboard and countered with the paddle before the bow could be dragged round, then the line went slack, it had either broken or the fish had unhooked.

Then she steered, the big waves following her and the wind that had fallen to a strong breeze, filling the sails.

To turn was impossible in that sea and even with the bow to the south she could never have made Karolin against the wind with a single paddle and that clumsy sail.

In the hands of the God who sends the seeds of the thistle adrift on the wind, fearless, and grasping the paddle, she steered with only one object—to keep the little craft from broaching to.

Blown to sea! For ages across the Pacific the seeds of life have passed like that from island to island, borne in lost canoes blown off the land at the mercy of chance and the wind.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT DAWN.

At dawn the wind had sunk to a steady sailing breeze and the swell had lost its steepness as the great blaze came in the east and the brow of the sun shattered the horizon. Katafa reached for the basket of food tied to the after pole of the outrigger and opened it.

As she ate, her eyes roamed far and wide from sea line to sea line—nothing! Karolin had vanished far from sight and Palm Tree was too far off to show—nothing but the vales and hills of the marching swell, the following wind and the sun now breaking from the sea that seemed to cling to him.

To beat back against the wind and the current was impossible to her, it was impossible even to turn the canoe with a single

paddle and in that swell; there was nothing to do but steer.

Then gulls came up on the wind, birds that had left Karolin before dawn and were bound for the fishing grounds off Palm Tree, they passed her, low flying and honey-colored against the sun to vanish snowflake-white in the distant blue.

Far to the westward lay the Paumotu, with their reefs and races and utterly unaccountable currents; behind, Karolin and the vacant sea stretching to the Gambiers, to the east the South American coast, a thousand miles and more away; to the north Palm Tree and the vacant sea stretching to the Marquesas—and all around silence. This new strange thing for which she had no name almost daunted her. She had lived with the eternal sound of the reef in her ears, it had been part of her world like the ground beneath her feet and now that it was withdrawn she was at a loss, the occasional flap of the sail, the whisper and chuckle of the bow wash, the fizz of the foam as the outrigger broke the gloss of the swell, all these sounds came to her strange against the silence.

A great sea current is a world of its own and, like the Kuro Shiwo this northern drift carried with it its own peculiar people. Jellyfish from the far south, albacores from the Gambier grounds, turtle drowsing or asleep on its surface, sometimes a shoal of flying fish like shaftless arrowheads of silver, shot by invisible marksmen, would pass, flittering into the water ahead; once uprunning a steeper wall of the swell she glimpsed a shark cradled in the glossy green like a fish in ice or a faun in amber. At noon a reef showed away to starboard, razor backed and spouting like a whale, and then just before sunset gulls began to pass her flying north; away across the water she could see more gulls in full flight, all making north.

Standing up in the last blaze of the sunset she strained her eyes—nothing. Once she thought that she could see a point breaking the far horizon, land or gulls' wings she could not be sure. Then with the dark the wind sank to a dead calm and the swell to a gentle heave of the sea and crouching in the bottom of the canoe, Katafa, her head resting against the outrigger pole, closed her eyes.

She awoke at dawn with the whole east-sky flushed like the petal of a vast rose

on which the day star glittered like a point of dew. A faint breathing of wind from the north brought a whisper with it, the whisper of the reef and for a second, just as she opened her eyes, the picture of Karolin came before her. Had she drifted back? Rising and grasping the mast she turned her face to the wind and there, far away still but breathing at her with the perfumed breath of the land wind, lay the form she had seen in mirage as a dreamer sees his fate.

Moment by moment, as the light increased, it grew clearer and more definite, till now, struck by the first level beams of the sun, it bloomed to full life across the blue.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUT OF THE SEA.

That morning three hours after sunup and half an hour after breakfast, fate and Mr. Kearney had a difference of opinion:

The bananas were ripe on the eastern side of the island and he had arranged in his mind to go and fetch a bunch, taking the quickest way—that is to say right over the hilltop instead of round by the lagoon edge—but he was lazy and disposed to put the business off to a more convenient time. He would have made Dick row him round in the dinghy only that Dick wanted the boat for purposes of his own beyond on the reef.

Sitting with his back against a tree bole he could see the figure of the boy away out on the coral; the amethyst and azure lagoon, the reef with the moving figure upon it and a touch of purple sea beyond, all made a picture as soothing as it was lovely on that perfect and almost windless morning.

But Kearney was not thinking of the beauty of the scene, bananas were bothering him, he did not want to move and they were calling on him to get on his legs, cross the island, cut them and fetch them.

Ten years of island life had altered Kearney almost as much as they had altered Dick. Always on the lookout for a ship during the first three years, he would not have left the island to-day unless shifted with a derrick. He had grown into the life, grown lazy and stout and grizzled—and moral. A most extraordinary type of beach comber. The child and the island, the sun and the easy way of life had all conspired in this work upon him. He had no hankering

now after barrooms; without tobacco for years he had taken to chewing gum, finding plenty of it in the woods, and he had devised several innocent and nonlaborious amusements for himself and the child, among others, shipbuilding. The very first act of Kearney when they had landed on the island had been the cutting of a little boat for Dick with a bit of wood. He could do anything with a knife and one day, some six years ago, when time was hanging heavy, the saving idea came to him of constructing a model of the lost *Raratonga*. It took him nearly eight months to accomplish, but it was a beauty when finished, with sails of silk made from an old shirt of Lestranger's and a leaden keel constructed from the lead wrappings of a tea chest which he managed to melt down.

They took it over and sailed it on the reef pool and next day he set to work on another, a frigate this time. Four ships altogether had left the stocks of the Kearney-Dick combination and meanwhile three real ships had touched the island, two whalers and a sandalwood schooner. The whalers Kearney had carefully avoided, the sandalwood schooner had come up in the arms of a hurricane, smashed herself to pieces on the reef, drowned every soul on board of her and left the coral littered with trade goods, belts of cloth enough to clothe a village, boxes of beads, cheap looking-glasses, dud Barlow knives—everything but tobacco.

Having contemplated the lagoon, the reef and the moving figure of Dick for a while Kearney suddenly shifted his position, rose, stretched himself and fetching a case knife from the shelf in the house turned toward the trees. The bananas had conquered. Passing through the woods he struck uphill till he reached the summit where he paused for a moment to rest, a figure not unlike that of Robinson Crusoe, standing with his hand on the great summit rock and gazing far and wide across the ocean.

Then he shaded his eyes. Far off on the dead calm sea a canoe was drifting, two miles away it might have been to the south and perhaps half a mile to the east. The land wind had died off completely and the tiny sail hung without a stir. He could not tell at that distance whether it had any occupants. It lay drifting with the current that would take it past the island just as it had taken the dinghy with the lost children of Lestranger.

Kearney gazed for a full minute, then turning he came running downhill and back through the trees to the lagoon edge. Dick was still in view; Kearney hailed him, waving his arms, and the boy understanding that he was wanted left the business he was on, ran to the dinghy and untying her pushed across.

Dick was worth looking at as he came alongside, standing up in the dinghy, the boat hook in his hands. Nearly thirteen, yet tall and big as a boy of fourteen or more, wearing a kilt of leaves, with the forthright gaze of an eagle and a face where decision met daring. A philosopher, looking at him, might have said, "Here is the making of the world's finest man, here is the perfect human being, neither savage nor civilized, swift as a panther, graceful as a tree, yet endowed with mind, decision and character."

Kearney saw only the red-headed boy whom he had watched growing up and who had been a handful in his way ever since he had been big enough to row the dinghy.

"There's a boat beyond the reef," cried Kearney, stepping into the dinghy. "Now get aft with you and give me the sculls. I'm go'n' to try 'n' fetch it in."

"About where y' say?" asked the boy.

"Out beyond the reef," replied the other, pushing off. "Ship the tiller an' keep us close to the bank. I've not time for talkin'."

Dick shipped the tiller and steered while the other put all his strength into his stroke. They passed the little cape, nearly brushing the trees, and then down the long arm of the lagoon stretching to the east. It was slack tide, just before the flood, and the water was calm at the break. They shot through taking the heave of the glassy swell, and there, drifting a quarter of a mile to the north, was the canoe, the sail still hanging without a stir.

"There's some un in her," cried Dick.

Kearney took a glance over his shoulder and saw the figure of the girl who had tried to make the break with her single paddle and failed. She was standing, holding on to the mast and looking toward them, a form graceful as the new moon, with her free hand sheltering her eyes against the sun.

As they drew closer her voice came across the water clear as a bell and hailing them in some unknown language.

"It's a girl!" cried Kearney.

"What's a girl?" asked Dick, so filled

with excitement over this new find that he was forgetting to steer.

"It's a female—mind your steerin'—you're a mile to starboard—there, let it be and I'll manage meself."

The girl, as they drew close, ran forward and seized the anchor rope. It had parted a good way from its fastening and there was some four fathoms of it left. She stood with it coiled in her hand and as the dinghy approached she sent the coil flying toward them straight and sure. Then as Kearney caught it she darted aft and seized the steering paddle, crying out in answer to the sailor's questions in the same strange bell-like voice but in a tongue dark to her saviors as Hebrew.

"Kanaka," said Kearney, "but she knows her business. Dick, leave that boat huk down. We aren't boardin' her; we'll tow her in. Catch hold of the rope."

He got the sculls in, fastened the rope end to the after thwart and then started to work towing the canoe's head round.

Though Dick had asked Kearney what a girl was, it was the word he was inquiring about, not the thing. The stupid old story of the boy who saw girls for the first time at a fair, was told that they were ducks, and then expressed his desire for a duck, has no foundation in psychology. Life is cleverer than that. Dick saw in Katafa a young creature something like himself; descended from a thousand generations of people who knew all about girls, his subconscious mind accepted her without question. She was far less strange to him than the canoe. His ancestors had never seen a South Sea canoe. This strange, savage, mosquitolike structure with its bindings of coconut sennit and its mat sail fascinated the boy far more than its occupant. To him, truly, it was like nothing earthly, the outrigger alone was a mystery and the whole thing a joy, a joy delightfully tinged with uneasiness, for the absolutely new is disturbing to the soul of man or beast. As he rowed, Kearney noticed that the girl was chewing something in the way of food and once he saw her bend and take up a drinking coconut and put it to her mouth. A fact that eased his mind, bothered by the idea that she might be starving. The tide was beginning to flood. It swept them through the break and as the dinghy turned up the right arm of the lagoon the towrope now tautening, now smacking the water, it was the girl's turn

to be astonished. The tall trees from outside the reef had seemed monstrous to her eyes, accustomed only to the flat circle of the atoll, but here, inside the reef, the density of the foliage, the unknown plants, the unknown smells, the trees sweeping up to heaven almost terrified her, brave though she was; the only familiar and comforting thing was the reef and its voice—but those trees in their hundreds and thousands, climbing on each other's shoulders!

Steering with her paddle she kept the canoe in line with the dinghy, the wild coconut almost brushing her as they turned the little cape; then as they came alongside the bank she sprang out and stood, her arms crossed and a hand on each shoulder, watching while the others landed and Kearney tied the boats up.

"Now then, Kanaka girl," said Mr. Kearney as he rose from this business and approached her, followed cautiously by the boy, "what's yer name?" Then pointing to his breast with his thumb, "I'm Jim—Jim. What's yourn, eh?"

She understood at once.

"Katafa," came the reply, then swift as a rippling stream, "*Te tataga Karolin po uli agotoimoana*—Katafa."

"Ain't no use," replied Mr. Kearney. "Tie a close hitch in it and we'll call you Jimmy. Want some food? God bless my soul where's the use in talkin' to her; here you, Dick, come along an' get the fire goin', come along, Kanaka girl." He clapped her on the shoulder—made to do so but his hand touched nothing but empty air.

"Well, I'm damned!" said Kearney. He had got the shock of his life. It was not the fact that she had evaded him but the manner of the evasion, his hand had missed the shoulder, driven it away seemingly, as wind moves a curtain, yet she had scarcely moved and her face and attitude had not altered in the least, she seemed quite unconscious of what had happened and the man who has ever tried to touch a taminanite will know exactly the feeling of Mr. Kearney as he turned to make the fire, followed by Dick.

Katafa drew closer, then, at a certain distance she squatted down and watched them at work. She had no fear of men or ghosts. Human beings and ghosts were things equally remote to Katafa who could touch or be touched by neither.

Infected by Le Juan and filled with wild

fancies, or maybe endowed with psychic powers, she had seen the "men who leave no footprints" walking in the sun blaze of Karolin. There was a sandy cove eight or nine miles from the break and here with Taori, the second son of Laminai, she had watched them walking like people astray and bewildered.

She had flung stones through them, Taori wondering and seeing nothing. At night, had you possessed the eyes of the Spanish girl, you would have seen in the dark of the moon and at a certain hour a man swimming in the starlight from the old anchorage of the *Pablo Póirez* toward the break, leaving a trail in the starlight, always at the same hour and always in the same direction, and sometimes on these nights fires would spring up on the reef where it trended to the west, lit by no man's hand, for no man was there.

But Palm Tree to her eyes seemed free of anything like this. Among the gifts presented by the wreck were three or four tin cases of Swedish matches, enough to last for years. Kearney had discarded the tinder box and he was lighting the fire with a box of matches, a fact more interesting than bonnets to Katafa as she squatted watching his every movement.

Then when the food was ready and Dick had fetched some water from the little spring at the back of the yam patch Kearney called to the "Kanaka girl" to pull in her chair.

She came within a couple of yards, but would come no farther, squatting on her heels in an attitude that gave her freedom to spring away at a moment's notice. Kearney stretched over with some food on a plate for her, then he handed a coconut bowl with some water in it. Then he began on his own meal. He seemed put out.

"She ain't right," said Mr. Kearney as though communing with himself.

"What ain't right, Jim?" asked the boy, a fish in his fingers. "Why ain't she right, Jim? Wha's the matter she can't talk?"

The only things he had ever heard Kearney address as "she" were the ships they made. Katafa had in some way taken in his mind a tinge from those delightful ships, she was a "she," the canoe helped, it was hers, now that the canoe was half out of sight hidden by the bank and Katafa sitting there close to him, she fascinated him. His passionate love of the sea, of the dinghy, of

the little ships, of everything connected with the water, all lent color to this strange new being who had come up out of the sea in that thing—it was almost as if she had a keel on her. He would have loved to make friends but he was too shy as yet and she couldn't talk so that he could understand.

He set his teeth in the fish.

"Lord, I dunno," said Kearney, his recent experience hot in his mind, yet unable to explain it in speech. "She ain't like other folk. There, don't be askin' questions but get on with your dinner. Maybe it's just she's a Kanaka."

"What's a Kanaka, Jim?"

"You get on with your dinner."

The sociable meal proceeded, Katafa "tuckin' into the food" with a good appetite but with an eye ever on Kearney. Kearney, by his attempts to clap her on the shoulder, had laid the foundation of a lot of trouble for himself. He had raised against him the something that Le Juan had bred in the subconscious mind of the girl.

No man, woman or child on Karolin had ever tried to touch her. She was taboo to them as they to her, the art of avoidance which was as natural and unconscious to her as the art of walking had always been exercised against an accidental touch. Kearney had done what no one else had ever done—tried to touch her.

But if you think that she reasoned this out in her mind you would be far from the truth. Whatever Le Juan's means of tuition may have been—a hot iron was one of them—they had left all but no mark on the conscious mind of the grown girl, otherwise her life would have been as impossible as the life of a person who has to think over each step he takes, each movement of the body and each respiration he makes. Le Juan had made the taboo not a direction to be obeyed but a law of being, living like a watchdog in the dark chambers of the girl's mind, a watchdog baring its teeth at Kearney.

Katafa had evaded the friendly blow of Kearney just as on Karolin she had often evaded the touch of hands in the pulling in of a fishing net, instantaneously and all but unconsciously, but the difference was vast. Kearney had placed himself among a new order of beings by his act. His clothes helped. She had never seen any one in trousers and shirt before. Decidedly this strange bearded man required watching.

Dick was different, for all his red head and straight nose and strange-colored eyes he might have been a boy of Karolin.

She finished her food. Kearney had given her a plate, one of the few unbroken of those Stanistreet had left behind for them. It had flowers painted on it and the thing intrigued her vastly. It seemed to her a new sort of shell and when the sailor rose, replete and drowsy, and went off for his siesta in a comfortable spot among the trees, Dick, who had received instructions to "clear up them things an' give's a call if she tries to meddle with the boat" saw Katafa furtively trying to scratch one of the flowers off the plate.

"They're painted on," said Dick suddenly losing his shyness. "You can't get them things off." Finding his voice gave him courage and getting on his legs he ran off to the house, returning in a minute with one of the ships, a frigate. Kearney had made rests for each one to stand on, and he carried the frigate, rest and all, and placed it close by her on the ground.

"Ain't like yours," said Dick, reclining beside it and handling the tiny spars so that she might see how they swung. "It's a fridgit."

The girl, appealed to in the language of ships and sitting on her heels, regarded the little vessel with interest. In Karolin lagoon, two miles beyond the break and in ten-fathom water, lay the hull of a sunk ship that the Kanakas had burned. She had knocked a hole in herself by drifting on a reef and the flames had only time to bring the masts down before she sank, and there she lay on an even keel clear to be seen in the crystal water and with the fish playing round her stern post.

The Karolin boys called her the big canoe of the *papalagi*. Katafa knew nothing of her history or of its connection with herself, but the shape was the same as the shape of that "fridgit," only the masts were wanting.

"Look!" said Dick, showing how the yards were swung. "She's square sailed, all but the mizzen same's your boat. You could reef 'em up only there ain't any reef points, she's too small, Jim says. This is the rudder an' tiller. You ain't got no rudder to yours." He looked up at her, from her face and the interest in it she seemed to understand; she leaned forward and moved the tiny tiller with her finger tip; a wheel

was beyond Kearney's art and the steering gear of Sir Cloudisley Shovel's ships had to suffice. Then she leaned farther forward and blew hard at the tiny main topsail, slinging the yard round.

"*Matogi*," cried she, "*O he amora—Matogi*."

"That's the way it goes," cried Dick, pleased to find her so apt and talking just as though she were able to understand every word, "and when you're sailin' close to the wind you haul it that way. That's square rig—wait a minit."

He rushed off to the house and returned with the schooner, dumping it before her.

"That's fore 'n' aft."

Katafa looked at the model of the *Rarotongua* with her head slightly on one side. She seemed admiring it. Dick, watching her, felt pleased. Many a grown-up English person, able to talk, would have failed in this business or blundered in their appreciation of these important things, but Katafa was one of the craft, seemed so anyway, and Dick, old friends with her now and free and easy as though she were Kearney, proceeded to demonstrate the action of the throat and peak halcyards in raising the gaff, the topping lifts in supporting the boom and how the head canvas was set. Then suddenly remembering duty he ran back to the house with the ships and set to work to clear away the remains of the food and the three plates. He did not wash the plates; he was too anxious to get busy again with Katafa.

She had become all of a sudden the first great event of his life. She could neither speak in ordinary language to him nor he to her—but she was youth. Though he had lived ten years with Kearney and though Kearney had practically taught him to talk the sailor had never got as close to him as this creature of his own age who had suddenly appeared as if at the lift of a curtain.

The instant Kearney had withdrawn the spell had begun to work; it might have been weeks before Dick would have shown those treasured ships to a grown person.

As he bustled about, filled with a new energy and interest, Katafa, who had risen to her feet, watched him. Light minded and irresponsible as the boy, there still lay between her and him an abyss that even youth could not cross, the abyss that had lain between her and the children of Karolin, with whom, yet, she had played, but as a person

might play with shadows. All the same, youth could gaze across the abyss, over which, despite everything, the little ships had sailed. These things had fascinated her, she could see more of them in the house, attractive as toys, yet mysterious as fetishes—maybe having something to do with the gods of Dick and Kearney.

Dick knew nothing of this. Duty done with he made another dash for the house, producing no ship this time, but a stick three feet long and a ball made of tia wood.

Kearney had invented a game for him, a sort of cross between baseball and cricket. The trunk of a Jack-fruit tree on the grove edge did for wickets and the run was from this to a breadfruit trunk and back. Kearney, since he had grown lazy had held off from this game saying it was "too much of a bother."

"Catch!" cried Dick, throwing the ball to Katafa. She caught it, he held out his hands and she flung it back hard and swift and sure. She could throw a stone well on to a hundred yards and throw it like a man.

He showed her the stick and tossing the ball back to her ran to the tree, pointed to it and then stood with the stick ready to defend it.

She understood at once.

When Kearney came forth from his afternoon rest he found Dick, tired out, sitting by the house, and the girl by the lagoon bank dabbling her feet in the water. It looked almost as though they had quarreled, but they had not in the least. One of Dick's moody fits had come on him as they often did after excitement or strenuous exertion. He was a different creature from the Dick of only a moment ago, and when these fits took him it was always the same; he seemed caught away to another world and liked to sit by himself.

If ever a mother "came out" in a child the lost Emmeline came out in Dick during these moods.

"What have you been doin' with the stick?" asked Kearney.

"Playin'," said Dick, waking from his reverie.

CHAPTER XIX.

A FIRE ON THE REEF.

Kearney had put shelves in the house to hold the ships so that they did not interfere with the floor where he slept with Dick.

The shack behind the house where the provisions had been stored still held, though the roof had gone pretty much to pieces, and here the sailor had fixed the sleeping quarters of Katafa.

Blankets had been given to them by the wreck, supplementing those left behind by Stanistreet, and getting along for sundown Kearney with three blankets on his arm, two for a bed and one for a quilt, beckoned the girl to follow him.

She stopped short at the entrance to the shack and then took a step backward, standing and watching him at his work.

Then when he came out he pointed to the blankets.

"There ain't no pilla," said Kearney, "but you won't be mindin' that. Now then, Kanaka girl, there's your bunk. Ain't you likin' the look of it?"

She had drawn back another step.

"In with you," said Kearney pointing to the couch.

She shook her head. Ask a fox to enter a trap.

"Well, then, you can just sleep in the trees," said he and off he went round the house leaving her to her choice.

Dick, tired out with the day, was in the house and sound asleep, and the sailor, who had a fishing line to overhaul, sat down by the door and set to work on it. As he sat busy with his fingers and reviewing with his mind Kanakas and their unaccountable ways he saw the girl coming out from the trees. She had fished two of the blankets out of the shack and she was crossing the sward with them toward the canoe that was tied to the bank. She got into the canoe with them and vanished from sight, all but her head, which was visible in the sunset light above the bank.

Now Kearney had old-fashioned ideas as to how young people should behave toward their elders and Dick had received many a "clip" from him for disobedience. He was starting to "go after" the girl when he saw two hands go up to her head. She was arranging her hair.

One might have fancied her before a mirror.

This sight checked him. He finished his work, put the line away and retired to the house. During their ten years of residence the house had almost been destroyed by a big blow from the northwest and Kearney in rebuilding had enlarged it.

There was plenty of room for him and Dick and to-night as he lay there, the four ships on their shelves above him and Dick sound asleep by the wall, he could see through the open doorway a new picture; the mat sail of the canoe still unfurled, and, just distinguishable in the fast rising twilight, the head of the girl above the bank.

Kearney was worried. Living in ease and quietude one might fancy worry his last visitant, but that was not so; quite small things, things he would never have given a second thought to on shipboard had the power to upset him here, and though he would not have changed his mode of life for worlds, a broken fishing line or a leak in the dinghy would make him grumpy for hours, cursing his fate and wondering what was going to happen next.

Katafa was worrying him now. She was unlike any Kanaka he had ever seen. Where had she come from, was it from that island he guessed to be lying down south there? And if so, might she not bring others of her kind after her? Then the way she had slipped from under his hand and those eyes of hers which she kept fixed on him. She wasn't right.

He dropped off to sleep with this conviction in his mind and dreamed troublous dreams, awaking about two in the morning to wonder what she was doing and whether everything was secure. Then, sleep driven away, he came out into the windless starry night where a six-day-old moon was lolling above the trees.

Away out to sea a red flicker met his gaze. A fire was burning on the reef. Trumpets blowing in the night could not have astonished him more.

He watched for a moment as the flame waxed and waned, now casting a trail of red light on the lagoon water, now dying down only to leap up again. Then he came running to the canoe, the girl was not there and the dinghy was gone, the paddle was gone from the canoe also; she must have taken it to paddle herself over to the reef, not being able to use the sculls.

There was plenty of dried weed and bits of wreckage on the reef to make a fire with, but how had she got a light? He came back to the house and searched for the box of matches on the little shelf outside where it was always put when done with. It was gone.

She must have come "smelling round"

when they were asleep, she must have noticed where the matches had been put and treasured up the fact in her dark mind!

"But what in the nation's she done it for?" asked Kearney of himself as he stood scratching his head. "What's she up to anyway?"

The night made no reply, only the rumble of the reef, now loud, now low, and the mysterious light of the fire, now waxing, now waning, flaring up only to die down again.

He came to the trees on the other side of the sward and watched for an hour till at last the fire died to a spark.

Then came the sound of the paddle as the dinghy stole like a beetle across the star-shot lagoon water and tied up at the bank. A figure passed along the bank toward the house. She was putting the match box back; then she came along toward the canoe, slipped into it and vanished from sight.

Kearney waited ten minutes, then he stole back to the house and turned in again.

"You wait till the mornin' and *P'U* l'arn you," said he to himself as he closed his eyes, composing his mind to slumber with the thought of the whacking in store for the Kanaka girl.

CHAPTER XX.

A FIRE ON THE REEF—CONTINUED.

Katafa, when she had arranged her hair and made her bed of blankets in the bottom of the canoe, lay down but she did not close her eyes. She lay watching the last glow of the sunset and then the instantly following stars held her gaze, talking to her of Karolin and the great sea spaces she had been suddenly caught away from.

The atoll island has never been adequately described by pen or brush—never will be. What brush or pen could paint the starlight on the great lagoons, the sunrises and sunsets, the vastness of the distances unbroken by any land but just the low ring of reef? Life on an atoll is like life on a raft, immensity on every side—and the sea.

Here the girl felt herself suddenly shut in, the groves rising to the hilltop fretted her spirit, the bit of lagoon was nothing and even the reef was different to the reef of Karolin. Kearney had raised something deep down in her mind against him and he seemed somehow now the center and core of all her trouble. Dick she scarcely thought of; he, like other human beings, was of little account to her.

Thoughts came to her of trying to get the canoe out and escaping back to the freedom which was the only thing she loved, but it was hopeless. She could never do the business single-handed. She was trapped and she knew it.

Now, when Le Juan wanted help from Nanawa, the shark-toothed god, she had several methods of invoking the deity. One of the simplest was by fire. She would go off, build a little fire and as she fed it repeat over it a formula, always the same string of words.

Something generally happened after that. Sometimes the wish would be granted—long overdue rain would come, or some enemy already dying would die, or the palu that had forsaken for a while the palu bank would come back.

But the shark-toothed one was a tricky deity and had a habit of sending other gifts along by way of lagniappe.

For instance, in that great drought long years ago Le Juan had sacrificed stacks of fuel to the god and weeks after he had sent the rain, but he also sent the Spanish ship with Katafa on board of it and Katafa had given Le Juan a lot of trouble and heart searching.

Again, two years ago, he had sent the palu back to the bank but at the same time he had extended the season in the lagoon when the fish were poisonous by a fortnight.

Sometimes he was quite amiable and would cure an indigestion without killing the patient as well—but it was all a toss-up. He was a dark force and even Le Juan recognized in a dim way that she was playing with evil and was never easy till the effects of her invocations were over and done with.

Katafa had often helped to stoke the little fires and she knew the ritual in all its simplicity. The thing had never interested her much till now.

Maybe Nanawa could help her, take the island away or knock it to pieces without hurting her, or lift it like a dish cover to the sky as she had seen it lifted by mirage, or free her in some way—any way.

She brooded for an hour or more over this business. Then having made up her mind she rose, skipped lightly on to the bank and moving silently as a shadow approached the house. She could tell by their breathing that the occupants were asleep and she could see the box of matches on the little shelf in the moonlight.

She took it and as she held the strange fire box in her hand the sudden impulse came to her, maybe from the shark-toothed one, to fire the house. The mysterious antagonism against Kearney urged her to destroy him. It seemed also a way out of her trouble.

The little ships saved the sleepers.

The remembrance of them suddenly came to the girl and the thought that some god of whom they were the insignia might be on the watch. She could not see them in the darkness of the house but they were doubtless there on their shelves, put there to protect the sleepers just as Le Juan hung over her bed place a shrunken human hand.

Maybe she was right and Kearney, without knowing, had placed them there under higher direction, but right or wrong the things acted as efficiently as a spell.

She turned away and taking the paddle from the canoe unmoored the dinghy and pushed off for the reef.

She found, as she had expected, plenty of fuel and the match box gave her no trouble. She had watched the process of striking a match carefully with those eyes from which no detail escaped and in a minute the stuff she had collected was alight and burning.

Then standing in the windless night and piling on dead weed, bits of wood and dried fish fragments that popped and blazed like gas jets, Katafa, with hands pressed against her *ridi* so that the flames might not catch its dracæna leaves, put up her prayers to the shark-toothed one, repeating the old formula of Le Juan and backing it with the unspoken wish that the island might be taken away and freedom restored to her.

An hour later she returned across the lagoon, tied up the dinghy and snuggling down in the canoe went asleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

NANAWA SPEAKS.

"Now then, Dick, I've her alone and don't get lookin' at her," said Mr. Kearney. "She's been misbehavin'."

"What's she been doin', Jim?" asked the boy.

"Playin' with the matches," replied the other, thinking it just as well not to go into full particulars that were sure to bring a string of Dick's endless questions.

They were seated at breakfast and Katafa

had drawn close for her food. Katafa could be ugly, she could be pretty, never was anything more protean than the looks of this Spanish girl who was yet in all things but birth and blood a Kanaka. This morning as she sat in the liquid shadow of the trees she was unpaintably beautiful. She had run away beyond the cape of wild coconuts and taken a dip in the lagoon, and now fresh from sleep and her bath, with a red flower in her hair and her hands folded in her lap, she sat like the incarnation of dawn, her luminous eyes fixed on Kearney.

But Kearney had no eye for her beauty.

"When was she playin' with them, Jim?" asked the boy, a piece of baked breadfruit in his fingers.

"Never you mind," replied the other. "Get on with your breakfast and hand us that plate. I'll l'arn her."

He passed a plateful of food to the girl and then helped himself and the meal proceeded, Dick attending to business but with an occasional side glance at the criminal.

Playing with the matches was a hideous offense for which he had been whacked twice in earlier days. He reckoned Kearney would whack her and he looked forward to the business with an interest tinged but not in the least unsharpened by his sneaking sympathy with the offense and the offender.

But, the meal finished, the sailor, instead of setting to, simply walked to the dinghy beckoning the girl to follow him. He got in, took the sculls and as she stepped after him taking her seat gingerly in the stern sheets, pushed off.

The pair landed on the reef, Kearney leading the way and glancing about him till they came on the remains of the fire.

"Now," said Kearney, halting and pointing to the ashes and the scorched coral, "that's what you've been doin', is it? What made you light that fire for, eh?"

Although the language of Kearney was to her as double Dutch to a Chinese she knew quite well his drift. He had discovered the fact that she had lit the fire. How? Maybe the god of the little ships had told him. She said nothing, however, as he went on, his voice rising in anger with every word.

"What made you touch them matches for, smellin' round when I was asleep and makin' off with the matches? I'll l'arn you."

He picked up a stalk of seaweed and made a "skelp" at her. She was quite close and it was impossible to miss her—all the

same the stalk touched nothing. She had skipped aside.

Trees had once grown here on the reef and the coral was smooth, and round and about this smooth patch Kearney, blazing with righteous wrath, pursued her. It was like trying to whip the wind. He tried to drive her on to the rough coral but she wasn't to be caught like that; she kept to the smooth and in three or four minutes he was done.

Flinging the stick of seaweed away he wiped his brow with his arms. Dick was watching them from the sward and he felt that he had been making a fool of himself.

"Now never you do that no more," said Mr. Kearney, shaking his finger at her. "If you do, b'gosh I'll skelp you roun' the island." He nodded his head to give force to this tremendous threat and was turning to the dinghy when something caught his eye.

Away to the east across the sparkling blue stood a sail.

The dead calm had broken an hour ago and a merry breeze was whipping up the swell. The ship, lying beyond the northern drift current must have been within sight of the island all night. Had she seen the fire?

Kearney, shading his eyes, stood watching her. A splash from the lagoon made him turn. Katafa had taken to the water, *ridi* and all, and was swimming back to the shore evidently determined not to trust herself with him in the dinghy. He looked at her for a moment as she swam, then he turned his gaze back to the ship.

She showed, now, square rigged and close hauled. Yes, she was beating up for the island. Would she put in at the break; was she a whaler, a sandalwood trader or what?

In those days of Pease and Steinberger, a ship in Pacific waters had many possibilities, and if Kearney had known that he was watching the *Portsay*, captained by Collin Robertson who feared neither God nor the Paumotus, he would not have waited on the reef so calmly.

No, she was not making for the break but to pass the island close to northward. She was no whaler, and relieved of this dread he stuck to his post as she came, every sail drawing, listed to starboard with the press of the wind and the foam bursting from her forefoot.

Now she was nearly level with him, less

than a quarter of a mile away, he could see the busy decks and a fellow running up the ratlines and at the sight of the striped shirts and the old familiar crowd, the sticks and ropes, the white-painted deck house and the sun on the belying canvas, Kearney, forgetting ease and comfort and the hundred good gifts God had bestowed on him, sobriety included, sprang into the air and flung up his arms and yelled like a lunatic.

The answer came prompt in a burst of sound, like the outcrying of gulls. The helm went over and the brig, curving under the thrashing canvas presented her stern to the doomed castaway on the reef.

He saw the glint of a long brass gun, a plume of smoke belying over the blue sea and as the wind of the shot went over him the report shook the reef like the blow of a giant's fist, passing across the lagoon to wake the echoes of the groves.

Aimed at nothing, fired for the fun of the thing, the shot had yet found its mark, bursting the canoe of Katafa into fifty pieces.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WISH.

Island life had not quickened Mr. Kearney's intellectual powers and for eight or nine months after that day things happened to him that he could not account for. Sometimes fishing lines broke that ought not to have broken; he would leave a bit of chewing gum on the shelf outside the house and it would be gone, taken by the birds maybe—but why did the birds suddenly develop a desire for gum? The dinghy sprang a leak that took him two days to mend and fish spears would become mysteriously blunted though put away apparently sharp enough.

He never thought of the girl. The feud between them had died down, at least on his part, and she and Dick seemed getting on well together. Too well perhaps from a civilized person's point of view. She and Dick could chatter away together now in the native. The girl had picked up at first enough English to help them along but at the end of nine months it was always the language of Karolin they spoke and even to Kearney's heavy intelligence it was funny to hear them "clacking away" and to think that she had made him talk her lingo instead of the other way about.

More than that, the boy was altering,

losing the fits of abstraction that had made him seem at times almost the reincarnation of his mother, losing also the lightheartedness of the child; laughing rarely and desperately serious over the little things of life, the moment seemed to him everything, as it is to the savage.

"She's turning him into a Kanaka," grumbled Kearney one day as he watched them starting for the reef, Dick with his fish spears over his shoulder, the girl following him. "Ain't to hold on to these days and sulks if he's spoke to crooked or crossed in his vagaries. Well, if he ain't careful I'll larn him for once and all."

But he never put the threat in action, too lazy maybe, or too dispirited, feeling himself a back number. He was. The reins had gone out of his hands. Youth had pushed him aside and the boy, moving away toward savagery, had left this relic of high civilization a good piece astern.

But one day Kearney was roused out of his apathy. Resting in the tree shadows at the opposite side of the sward he saw the girl who fancied herself alone and unobserved cautiously approaching his house.

Never for one single day since her landing had she lost the desire to escape, to find freedom and the great spaces of the sea. Her intercourse with Dick had attached her neither to Dick nor the island, yet beyond playing tricks upon Kearney she had shown no sign of the fret that lay in her soul.

The cannon shot from the *Portsay* that had burst the canoe in pieces and the report of the gun that had rolled in echoes from the woods, these in her firm belief were the manifestations of the power and the voice of the shark-toothed one. Just as firmly she believed that some other god had intervened frustrating the doings of Nanawa and spoiling the canoe out of spite.

The idea had come to her that maybe it was the god who presided over the little ships, that if she got rid of them, not all at once, for that might make a disturbance with the god, but one by one, the way might be clear.

Kearney had never suspected her of stealing and throwing away his gum, of breaking the fishing lines or blunting the spears, and if she took these things off into the wood one by one and smashed them he would be equally stupid and unsuspecting—perhaps.

It was worth trying, and to-day, finding herself alone, she stole up to the house and

peeped in. There they stood in the twilight on their shelves, the things whose god had broken her canoe. Impudent, unbroken themselves and no doubt manned by sprites they stood, the schooner, the frigate, a full-rigged ship and a tiny whaleman with bluff bows, wooden davits, crow's nest and try works, all complete.

An old knife of Kearney's lay on the little shelf by the door beside the box of matches. She could not resist that. Leaving the matches untouched she picked up the knife and flung it into the lagoon. Then she entered the house and lifted the whaleman from its shelf. It was the smallest and it was just as well to begin with the smallest, and she turned to the door with it and saw Kearney running across the sward, dropped the whaler, sprang from the doorway and ran. Another half minute and she would have been trapped.

Kearney, on seeing her entering the house, had made a bolt from the trees on the opposite side, thinking he had her bottled, but he was too late and as for chasing her he might as well have tried to course a hare. Stopping suddenly and picking up Dick's tia-wood ball which was lying in his way he took aim at her as she ran, catching her full in the small of the back as she dived into the trees.

The sound of the smack of the ball followed by a gasping cry came back to him. Then she vanished, traceless but for the swaying leaves.

"That will l'arn you," said Mr. Kearney, turning to the house and picking up the whaler, undamaged but for a broken main topmast. He knew now who had stolen his gum, blunted the spears and outraged the dinghy. The flinging of that knife into the lagoon had told him everything and as he sat down by the door to repair the broken spar he took an oath to be even with her.

"Break the fish lines, would you?" said he as he sat with the whaler clipped between his knees as in a vise and his fingers busy unrigging the mast. "Fling me knife into the water—well, you wait. Not another bite or sup will you have that you don't get yourself or me name's not Jim Kearney. Not another bite or sup till you go down on your marrow bones and beg me pardon." He worked away, his soul raging in him, his mind fumbling round and remembering other things to be laid to her account. Gum that had vanished, a saw

that had gone west, spirited off as if by pixies—he had put these levitations down to his own carelessness or forgetfulness, quite unable to imagine a human being's tricky malevolence as the agent.

As he worked the splash of oars came from the lagoon and Dick landed with three red-backed bream strung on a length of liana. Seeing Kearney alone he looked round for Katafa but could see no sign of her.

"Where's she gone?" asked Dick.

Kearney looked up, the back number had taken fire at last. "Get off with you and don't be askin' me questions!" he shouted, just as if he were speaking to a man, not a boy. "Go 'n' look for her if you want to find her, throwin' me knife in the water and smashin' me lines—the pair of you is one as bad as the other; always tinkerin' together, you and her."

The boy drew back, staring at the other with wide-pupilled eyes.

"What's she been doin'?" he asked.

"Doin'!" cried Kearney. "I've told you what she's been doin'. Go 'n' hunt for her in the wood if you want to know what she's been doin'. Well you know what she's been doin', standin' there like the damned Kanaka she's turned you into an' askin' me what's she been doin'. Clear off with you."

The boy flung down the fish and started off running toward the trees to the right of the sward. As he vanished Kearney heard his voice crying out in the native: "*Katafa, hai! amamoi Katafa! hai, hai!*"

"Kanaka," grumbled Kearney.

Katafa deep in the gloom of the groves heard the call but she made no answer. Her mind was in a turmoil.

Once, long ago on Karolin, a stone thrown by a child had struck her accidentally, rousing in the dark part of her mind a confusion and resentment that almost upset her reason. As in the case of Kearney the child had been behind her, she had not seen the stone coming and the sudden blow was as though some one had struck her with a fist. It was the same now. Though she had recognized instantly that it was only the ball that had struck her the shock remained.

She stood for a while listening to the far-off calling of Dick. "*Katafa, hai! amamoi Katafa! hai!*" It grew fainter, he was taking the wrong direction and now with the suddenness of a clapped door silence cut him off.

That was a trick of the woods caused

maybe by the upward trend of the land, a person calling to you and moving away in a horizontal direction would suddenly be cut off.

Katafa had never been alone in the woods before this; she had always gone accompanied by either the boy or Kearney. Never had she grown accustomed to these vast masses of trees, their gloom, their congregated perfumes, the strange lights and shadows made by the moving branches and fronds, the sense of being surrounded; always among them the great distances of the atoll cried louder to her to come back and the heartache and homesickness grew more intense.

But to-day she had lost her fear of the trees and the call of Karolin had lost for a while its power. The outrage committed by Kearney had shaken her away from all other considerations, all other pictures but that of the first man who had struck her.

She moved away to the right and entered an alley formed by a double line of mata-mata trees. Ferns grew here on either side and above in the liquid gloom cables of lian-tasse swung powdered with starry blossoms.

She stood for a moment glancing up at the orchids that seemed like birds in flight, the bugles of the giant convulvuli and the far-off roof of leaves moving to the wind.

Then she went on, reaching at last a little bay in the trees, ferns and bushes where the glint of something white caught her eye. It was a skull; she pushed the leaves aside, the whole skeleton was there, the ribs still articulated, the vertebræ intact. Flame lit by mortal hand could not have calcined the bones more whitely, destroyed the flesh more completely than the slow fire of time living here through the years amidst the cool green ferns.

Katafa, holding the leaves aside, gazed at the skull. Among Le Juan's properties had been a man's skull used when she was invoking the dark powers against some enemy.

As Katafa gazed at the skull the thought of Kearney came to her and the vision of him lying like that—and the wish.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SEA DEVIL.

When Dick came back to the house the girl had not returned.

Kearney seemed to have recovered his temper and presently putting the ship away on the shelf till to-morrow he helped the

boy to prepare supper. They scarcely spoke over this business, the shadow of the quarrel still hung between them, and that supper as they sat silent opposite one another was a bad mark in the life of Dick. It was his coming-of-age party, for Kearney was treating him as a man with whom he had a difference, not as a boy to be threatened and skelped.

Neither of them saw that far-away scene of the Dick of the *Raratonga*, the tall sailor dancing the tiny child in his arms, and crying out to Bowers: "Says his other name's M. Sure as there's hair on his head he's been tellin' me. Dick M.'s his name, ain't it, bo?"

Neither of them saw the early island days when Dick M., left entirely in the sailor's charge by his grandfather, fished in the lagoon with thread for line and played at fish spearing on the reef and tried to scull the dinghy guided and assisted by his big companion.

Dick, sitting there in the sunset this evening was no longer a child, not quite a man, he was greater than a man, fresh from the hand of nature that had molded and wrought on his father and mother, not quite civilized, not quite a savage, a poet might have seen in him the youth of the world, the dawn of man before cities arose to cast their shadows on him, before civilization created savages.

Neither of them saw the long years of companionship during which they had worked as shipbuilders together, the storms and incidents by shore and reef—it was all as nought. Katafa had brought a new interest to Dick. Age and laziness had done their work with Kearney.

As they sat like this, the meal nearly finished, they saw the girl. She had come out from among the trees away on the other side of the sward. She was carrying something under her arm. She stood for a moment shading her eyes against the sunset and looking toward them, then she vanished back among the trees, and Dick, rising to his feet, went running across the sward. He knew where to find her. Since the breaking of the canoe she had made a shack for herself among the trees and there she was crouched now and dimly to be seen in the fading light.

At the sound of the parting of the leaves she moved suddenly as if trying to hide something with her body.

"Katafa," said the boy, speaking in the native, "the food is waiting for you and he is no longer angry."

"It does not matter, Taori," replied her voice from the shadows. "I will eat to-morrow."

"What is that you have beneath you there?"

"A breadfruit, Taori—I want no better food."

"Aha!—but you have no fire to cook it."

"It does not matter, Taori, I will cook it to-morrow."

"Then eat it raw," said he, angry with her, and off he went.

Taori was the name she had given him.

When he had gone she took the skull which she had been hiding and placed it beside her, then she lay down with her eyes fixed on the ruddy-tinted light of the sunset visible through the spaces of the leaves.

There was no moon that night and a dead calm had set in an hour before sunset. The heat was oppressive; even the great Pacific seemed drugged and drowsy and the sound of the surf on the reef the breathing of a sleeper uneasy in his sleep.

Kearney, awaking about midnight, came out for a breath of air. It was almost as oppressive out of doors as in the house and above the trees the sky, heavy with stars, stood like the roof of a jeweled oven; the fronds of a palmetto by the water stood without a tremor and the lagoon lay like a fallen sky of stars, tremorless as space itself.

Kearney came down to the bank and sat bathing his feet in the water, the ripples waving out and shattering the reflected firmament. He heard the rustle of robber crabs feeding on the fallen drupes of a pandanus near by, the splash of a heavy fish beyond the cape of wild coconut, the fall of a nut from the grove behind the house, the fret and murmur of the reef—no other sound from land and sea and all that wilderness of stars.

Then as he lay on his elbow yawning and half asleep, a spark of light that was not a star struck his sight. It was on the reef line. It died out, came to life again, flickered and grew. Some one was lighting a fire on the reef. He sat up, glanced at the dinghy lying safely at her moorings, then out away at the far-off fire.

"She ain't taken the boat," said he to himself, "she must have got over swimmin'. Curse that Kanaka! What trick is she up to

anyway signaling? That's what she's after—signaling, that's her game, maybe to bring a hive of natives atop of us."

He rushed off to see if the box of matches had been taken; no, it was there, but he knew she could light a fire with a fire stick. She had taught Dick to do it. He came running back to the dinghy, got in, unmoored her and pushed out.

He had always had it in his mind that the fire she had lit long ago was a signal made to attract her people whoever they might be.

The absurdity of this idea never struck him, he just "had it in his mind" as an easy way of accounting for the matter, and tonight in face of this second offense his wrath rose up against the girl as it had never risen before. Everything conspired, the heat, the want of sleep, the quarrel with Dick and the long antagonism she had constructed against herself by snatching Dick away into Kanaka land and making him talk her lingo; her very youth was against her to-night. It was her youth that had made her companions with Dick. Kearney had killed men in his time and the years of soft island life, the companionship of the child, the absence of drink, while softening him, had not destroyed the fierce something which was not Kearney and which could wake under stimulus to strike regardless of consequences.

Guiding the dinghy across the water he was steering straight for murder. Not intentional murder, but the murder we come on in the slums when men of Kearney's type urged to the deed by a nagging wife or gone-wrong daughter and assisted maybe by alcohol suddenly give loose to themselves and maim or kill.

His project was to land unobserved if possible and then go for her with a scull, bowl her over and then beat the devil out of her once and for all with his fists. He'd "T'arn" her this time, sure.

Less than halfway across he drew in his sculls and then with a single scull at the stern began working the boat almost noiselessly toward the reef. He could see her now standing by the fire and feeding it, the cairngorm light of the flames upon her face and arms. It was a big fire and lit the reef, the lagoon water and the foam of the gently curling waves. Great fish attracted by the light were swimming in the waters of the lagoon nosing about the reef. The news had gone far and wide that something was

doing and could Nature, who has her own methods of warning men and beasts, have expressed herself in writing, with fire for ink, above the breaking foam, would have appeared the words: "The reef is dangerous to-night."

Then as Kearney drew closer the girl who had suddenly turned and sighted him broke away from the fire and ran.

He drew in the scull, took his seat and seizing the other scull rowed as if rowing a race. The nose of the dinghy crushed against the coral. He sprang out, secured the boat and turned scull in hand.

The girl was gone.

Beyond the fire glow he thought he saw her for a moment but the light dazzled his eyes and when he put it behind him he could see nothing but the starlit coral, its humps and dips and pools, the foam of the waves and the tranquil mirror of the lagoon.

He knew quite well what had become of her; she had dipped into one of the reef pools—they were the only possible places of concealment. She had not taken to the lagoon, he could see that at a glance, for the water lay unrippled and a swimmer's head would have shown even more clearly than by day. He came along grasping the scull, with the anger of the balked hunter now at his heart. He looked into the first great pool—nothing, only a trapped fish flitting like a ghost here and there, its shadow ghost following it across the white coral sand of the bottom.

He rose and was moving on when a great undulation came in, the lagoon water flowing from behind him and spreading to the west.

Kearney turned. The fire still gave a good light and between him and the fire something had heaved itself on to the coral. Attracted by the firelight it had left the lagoon soundless as a crawling cat, yet tons in weight. It was only some thirty feet away from him, yet it seemed formless, a long heaped mass covered with shiny tarpaulin. Then suddenly it took form extending itself like a slug, lamps, like the headlights of a locomotive, blazed out and around the lamps great serpents curled like the locks of Medusa.

For one fatal moment he stood staring at

the thing before him. Then a rope slashed round his waist and tightened.

He was caught.

Katafa had taken refuge in the second great pool, a pool some four feet deep and large enough for a person to swim in. The water was tepid and the floor of soft sand, and as she slipped into it gracile as a serpent she did not look to see what fish there might be there.

A small whip ray, an electric eel or a stinging jellyfish would have made the pool untenable, she knew; but she chanced it and lying submerged to the chin waited and listened.

She felt an eel pass like a cold waving ribbon over her; it touched the outer side of her left leg as it made its way along the sand and was gone. Then she felt the tap of small sharp-pointed fingers here and there on her body. Fish were nuzzling her, yet she dared not move for dread of setting the water waving. Instinct told her that Kearney was more to be feared than fish or eels or the great crab of the reef and even when a sting like a hot needle sticking in her side told her that a banda fish had attacked her flesh her only movement was the drift of her right hand like floating seaweed toward her side, and the sudden snap of the fingers as the banda fish, caught by the hand, was crushed to death.

She kneaded the fragments viciously between her fingers, then as she released them, sudden and sharp came a cry, the piercing cry of a man who has been speared or stabbed with a shark-toothed dagger. Raising her head swift as a lizard she glanced, shuddered and dived again. She had seen Nanawa.

Snuggling into the tepid water she lay listening—nothing, only the sound of the surf rising and falling to the pulse of the sea while the untroubled stars shone down on her and the minutes passed bringing not another sound to tell of what was happening—of what had happened.

Then raising herself gently she looked again. The reef showed nothing but the last embers of the fire. The dinghy was lying still just where she had been moored but of the man who had brought it across there was no trace.



In the Manner of a Winner

By William Slavens McNutt

Author of "The Girl in Tears," "A Slice of the Moon," Etc.

Golf has many lessons for Life—but Life can teach the golfer how to play the game, too.

STUART JAMIESON was one of those men who make golf professionals in America wealthy and miserable. The extent of his inability to play the game well was excelled only by his determination to make a pal of par. Jock Dundas, the professional at Stuart Jamieson's home club in a Western city, labored with him persistently and profitably for five trying years, at the end of which time the unsuccessful pupil was still in the mood to throw a party whenever he succeeded in getting around the course under a hundred.

Jock Dundas was Scotch and thrifty but he had the soul of a real golfer and eventually the mental misery which Mr. Jamieson's butchery of the ancient art caused him, overbalanced the pleasure of the tuition fees that his stubborn attempts to learn put into the pro's pocket.

"You're wastin' your money and my time," he told Mr. Jamieson bluntly. "I might as well try teachin' an elephant to fly like a hummin' bird as to try to teach you to play golf. The elephant can't fly like a hummin' bird, no matter how much you teach him, an' you couldn't learn to play golf even if you was to commit suicide and go back to Carneestie, Scotland, and be born again there, where a man who can't play golf can make his livin' exhibitin' himself as a freak."

"Do you mean that, Jock?" said Mr. Jamieson.

"I do, sir," said the professional firmly. "If any man livin' can teach you to break a hundred, day in and day out, I can take a Dublin boy and teach him to be King of England. I can use the money you pay me for lessons, Mr. Jamieson, but my conscience would let me rest easier if I made me livin' hunting up widowed scrub ladies with a wee mite saved up an' robbin' them forcibly of their earnin's. Quit, Mr. Jamieson! For your sake an' my sake an' the sake of the game we both love, quit! I don't know where in the Bible it says anything about a case like this, but it must be some kind of a sin for you to keep on the way you're goin'."

The above advice was given on the seventh tee near a deep ravine. Mr. Jamieson beckoned his caddy to bring his bag of clubs.

"Go to the clubhouse," he commanded when he had relieved him of his burden, "and bring me some coal oil, about a quart."

"Bring you what?" said the boy, mystified.

"Some coal oil," said Mr. Jamieson. "Don't stand there gawking at me. Go to the caddy master and tell him Mr. Jamieson wants a quart of coal oil. Get it and bring it to me."

Whereupon Mr. Jamieson marched off into the ravine with his bag of clubs.

In a spot among the rocks he took the sticks from his bag one by one, and breaking them over his knee, arranged them in a neat pile. On the pile he deposited his store of balls. Over all he placed the bag. Then he stood, waiting, silent, drawing hard on his cigar till the mystified caddy returned with a glass pitcher containing a quart of oil. Jamieson poured the oil over the pile of golf implements, knelt and applied the flame of a match.

Then when clubs, balls and bag were no more than a mass of slightly smoking ashes he turned away and walked toward the clubhouse with Jock Dundas. Nearing the locker room he spoke.

"I don't know why I should have wanted so much to play the game well," he said. There was actually the hint of a break in his voice. "I don't know why, but I did, Jock. I certainly did!"

"I know you did, sir," Jock said understandingly. "There's Scotch in you from somewheres back. The Scotch are queer, sir, and the queerest thing about them is golf."

Jamieson sighed and held out his hand.

"Thanks, Jock," he said gently. "Good-by."

"Good-by, sir," said Jock. And that was the last the country club saw of J. Stuart Jamieson for nine years.

He was busy during that period with coal and steel and wheat and busy to some considerable purpose. He couldn't play golf but he certainly could make money. He was one of the richest men in the Middle States when after nine years of absence he again drove up to the clubhouse and stepped out of his car. With him was a blond, blue-eyed, chunky youngster of eight. Together the man and the boy sought out Jock Dundas.

"This is my son Freddie, Jock," Mr. Jamieson said briefly. "He's eight years old. See what you can do with him."

"Yes, sir," said Jock. "I've some wee sticks in the shop that'll just fit him. Has he done any playin' at all?"

"No," said Mr. Jamieson.

"Thank God!" said Jock fervently.

Three months later Jock Dundas called on Mr. Jamieson at the latter's office.

"I have some news for you," he said. "I have found out why you couldn't play golf. The Big One, up above, that gives a^c takes, held out on the game that was comin' to you in the natural course of events, to have more than enough to give your son."

"Can the boy play?" Mr. Jamieson asked eagerly.

"He cannot," said Jock sternly. "If an eight-year-old boy could play the game it would not be the game it is. He can't play golf, of course, but he can come nearer to playin' it than any eight-year-old I ever knew or heard of. Leave me have him for five or six years more, an' barrin' one thing, Mr. Jamieson, I can promise you that if he don't win the national title he'll be up there worryin' years off the life of the man who beats him. Barrin' one thing, mind you."

"What's that?"

"The lad has a temper."

Mr. Jamieson nodded and sighed. "He gets that from me," he admitted regretfully.

The admission was not necessary. Any one who knew of J. Stuart Jamieson knew of his temper. With the years he had so far gained control of it that he could more or less unleash or suppress it at will. There were times when it came in handy, that temper of J. Stuart Jamieson's; times when it swept away opposition like a cyclone in full action; times too when it stimulated J. Stuart himself to a frenzy of keen effort that he could have attained in no other way. But back in the earlier years there had been times when that temper had cost him opportunities and friends, and once, for a short, ugly period he had faced the possibility of a charge of murder while the doctors worked to save the life of a man he had struck while intoxicated with fury.

"The lad has the game to win," Jock Dundas went on, "but he has the temper to ruin a winnin' game. He'll need trainin' for that, Mr. Jamieson, a trainin' that I can't give him."

"I'll do my part," Mr. Jamieson promised earnestly as he rose and grasped the professional's hand.

The hint of a mist came to his eyes, his voice was deep with feeling.

"It's just a game," he said, "but I want the boy to be good at it, Jock. I don't know why, but I want him to be awfully good at it. I want him to be the best, Jock, for some reason or other. I want that as badly as I ever wanted anything."

"Yes, sir," said Jock understandingly. "There's Scotch in you, an' the Scotch are queer."

Jamieson smiled and patted the pro on the back.

"And the queerest thing about them is golf, eh, Jock?"

"That's right, sir," said Jock. "You have the idea."

"Keep at the boy," Mr. Jamieson said earnestly. "I'll do what I can to help with the temper business. I want him to be the best."

Then began for Freddie Jamieson a period of training approximating slavery. To the customary schooling of a boy of his class and time was added golf. Not the recreative golf of the average boy or man but golf as it is felt by certain fanatic Scots who understand it as something a little less than their religion but much worthier of sacrificial devotion than anything but their religion.

As a shot maker he was a wizard from the beginning, always provided that nothing happened to disturb his temper, but a bad lie, or a slightly misplaced shot at a critical stage of a match would send him off into a fury which left him wild on fairways and greens for the rest of the day's play. Jock Dundas labored with the boy on the links and Mr. Jamieson labored with him at home. Outside the boy's school hours golf was dinned into him ceaselessly.

When he was thirteen years old he won his first sectional championship; and the next year, a sturdy, bronzed, blue-eyed, blond and chunky youngster of fourteen, he went up for his first try in the big show, the National Amateur Championship.

The night before he boarded the train for the club where the championship was played that year his father talked to him long and earnestly on the necessity of keeping his temper in hand. He had lectured the boy about this before, hundreds of times, but never with such an air of portentous solemnity.

"It's a fault you've got to beat, son," he told him. "Not only for the sake of your game but for the sake of your own good name and mine; for the sake of your mother and the friends that believe in you. You're going up there where there'll be thousands of people watching you and where everything you do will be published in the papers

from coast to coast and from Canada to the Mexican border. I'm not afraid of your disgracing yourself or any of the rest of us by anything you may do unless you get mad and blow up; and if you do that, son, it is going to be terrible. Just terrible! A man that don't amount to much and can't do anything well enough to get himself noticed can have a bad temper and blow off steam once in a while and it doesn't make any particular difference. But a fellow like you can't do it, Freddie. For a fellow like you to indulge that sort of a fault is just like doing a lot of things that they fire men out of clubs for and out of business and society in general. It's just plain downright dishonorable for a fellow in your position to let himself go that way."

Young Freddie was almost sick with emotion when his father finished. His conscience was too acute to be healthy anyhow, and he went to bed that night quite convinced that as between committing bloody murder and showing the slightest display of temper while he was playing in a big event he would be much less guilty of an unforgivable crime if he chose to go out on the street and casually put a bullet through somebody's heart.

In this frame of mind, cruelly overloaded with a sense of obligation, young Freddie Jamieson made the journey to the country club where the championship was being held that year. It was a tough spot for any fourteen-year-old boy. Golf had just begun to come into its own in the United States. It might be more nearly proper to say that it had begun to reach out from its own and gather in a goodly share of the public sporting interest which had formerly belonged exclusively to baseball, football, fighting and track athletics.

The galleries which followed the matches of the championship events were becoming sufficiently large to be disturbing. Championship golf was no longer a game played before a few personal friends and a small delegation of silent fanatics. Each shot had to be made under the gaze of hundreds and sometimes thousands of people, some of whom were sure to move or talk or cough at the wrong moments. There were sporting writers present from all over the United States to watch and write, not only the play, but each observable demonstration of character and temperament that could be made into interesting reading.

The golf writers, more than a score of them from various large cities, fell upon young Freddie Jamieson like a pack of hungry wolves on a large hunk of fresh meat. Here was copy for a fare you well. A fourteen-year-old boy in the National Amateur Championship! A youngster, minus the dignity of even the downy hint of a coming beard, marching onto the links to do battle with the best of all ages that the United States, Canada, England, Scotland and France could promise. They described him in detail and quoted him in full. They told what he liked to eat and what he wore; what he read and how recently he had given up playing marbles, spinning tops and flying kites. They told about his home and his family, his smile and his frown, his height, weight and tastes in neckties. They wrote about all these things in careful detail and a nation that loves youth almost as much as it loves the unusual read and talked about these stories in which both youth and the unusual were dominant.

Young Jamieson was keenly conscious that the eyes of the nation were upon him as he played his shots and miserable with fear lest he should be guilty of conduct that would justify national reproach. Be it said to the boy's credit that in spite of this overload of anxiety he played good golf in the qualifying rounds and won his first match handily.

And then he met Chet Barton, the New York star. Chet was twenty-two and a veteran in big events. He was especially dangerous in match play on account of his personality. He was always technically true to the etiquette of the game and yet his ability to rattle an opponent was unexcelled. No one could prove that he got on a man's nerves intentionally. He did it partly with his grin, which was a work of art.

When his opponent made a perfect shot, Chet could say: "Beauty, old man!" in a perfectly correct tone; and the grin that accompanied the compliment would make the man spoken to want to haul off and hit him in the mouth. The grin said, "Well, even a dub like you can make a good shot once in a while. Of course it doesn't worry me, because I know it was an accident and won't happen again; and you, you poor boob, I suppose you think you've hit your stride now and you're going to burn up the course with me. Well, I'll show you!"

The grin said all of that and more; said it plainly and yet it was just a grin and one can't find legitimate cause for a quarrel because a man parts his lips in a smile.

And Chet would grin, too, when an opponent made a bad shot. Not at the time the shot was made—Chet was far too clever for that—but a little while afterward when he was certain that his opponent would see him he could be depended on to sight some acquaintance in the crowd to whom he would wave; and then the grin would come; a grin that said plain and loud: "This match will be over pretty soon. I've got this fellow on the run now. He's cracked wide open and I'll win every hole from here on."

And yet there was nothing in the grin to which any one could take exception. It was merely a smile of recognition at sight of a friend in the gallery.

He had the trick, too, of conceding putts for a half and sometimes for a win. He would pick up an opponent's ball and toss it to him, doing an apparently generous thing, seeming to admit that the other man's skill was so great that there was no question of his making the shot. He always grinned when he did this—Chet Barton did—and the grin said plain and loud: "Here you are, little boy, you can have this. I'm so far superior to you that I can afford to concede this putt, because, of course, I'll beat you by a big margin anyway."

And poor little Freddie Jamieson, fourteen, wracked by the strain of his first national performance in the torturing glare of the spotlight, wracked with this, and worn by the fear of misconducting himself—the fear that his father had so skillfully, almost brutally instilled into him—went against this ruthless master of the art of goat getting in his second round of match play.

In the morning round Chet Barton did his stuff with consummate skill. To those in the gallery without the vision to see below the surface it appeared that Chet was taking a fatherly interest in his young opponent, rather helping him along. As a matter of fact he was punishing the poor youngster savagely with patronizing and only apparently generous expressions and gestures. Young Jamieson understood and fought desperately to smother the fury that this understanding kindled in him. In spite of this fury and his attempts to smother it he kept

his game sound until well into the afternoon. He lost the fifth hole in the afternoon round by missing a two-foot putt; and this loss put him one down to his cunning opponent. As the players walked together toward the sixth tee Chet whispered to him:

"Crowd getting on your nerves, sonny? Terrible nuisance, aren't they? Don't let them bother you. They'll be tickled to death to see you crack wide open. Always following around hoping they'll have the satisfaction of seeing a fellow break. Just keep a tight grip on yourself and don't pay any attention to them. You're doing fine, but don't get nervous. Whatever you do, don't get nervous."

Freddie furiously fought back the impulse to turn and strike Barton. The effort left him hot and trembling. When he stepped up to the tee his eyes were misty with unshed tears of rage. He sliced miserably into heavy rough in the woods.

"Too bad, Freddie," Chet said aloud, so that many heard his expression of sympathy; and then under his breath: "Steady now, sonny. Don't lose your nerve."

Many in the gallery spoke highly of Barton's generous attitude toward his youthful adversary. A few who understood would gladly have assisted in carrying out the idea if any one had suggested lynching him.

Freddie trudged away into the rough, trembling from head to foot, his face burning, the tears starting from his eyes, conscious that the eyes of the nation were upon and fighting a battle for control of himself; a battle much too fierce for one of his years and temperament. He swung viciously at the ball with his niblick and knocked it a futile ten yards farther into still worse rough. As he walked on to make his next shot he caught sight of Barton standing in the fairway waiting. Barton was grinning broadly. As Freddie caught sight of him out of the tail of his eye he erased the grin from his features and replaced it with an expression of sympathy. It was a skillful piece of work, the master touch of a day's carefully calculated irritation.

Freddie struck at his ball again, the tears running down his cheeks. He missed it and exploded. He smashed his niblick over his knee and for the space of a half minute went raving, blubbering mad. When he had partly recovered himself he shamefacedly conceded the hole and from then gave a most miserable exhibition of first-year golf,

Barton taking each successive hole to win eight and six on the twelfth green of the afternoon round.

It was Freddie's last flash of temper. The humiliation of that afternoon and of the next day, when descriptions of his outburst occupied hundreds of columns of space in hundreds of newspapers, and of the following months when sport writers in retrospective comment often referred to it, so scourged him that he never thereafter had even the temptation to unleash his temper.

Year after year he tried for victory in the National event and year after year he was turned back. Year by year his golf grew more flawless and yet he could not win the big honor to which his game entitled him. Three different times he advanced to the finals in the National event only to be defeated by men shooting far beyond their speed at the time they met him. Each year he was the favorite for the championship and each year he lost.

Those whose business it is to analyze cause and effect in big sporting events could no longer cite the young fellow's unruly temper as a reason for his inability to gain the heights. Rather it began to be whispered about that he was lacking in the combative element necessary for winning in match play. Whereas he had once been a stormy, explosive, uncertain player, he had developed into something approximating an automaton on the links. While opponents of lesser skill flamed into a fury of temporary excellence when playing against him at critical periods, the one-time stormy Jamieson played always with the calm manner of a reflective carpenter busy at a routine task.

In the late summer of the year he graduated from college he made his seventh futile attempt in the National event.

On the second day of match play he went against Chet Barton again and again lost. Freddie played his customary game of good golf that was not quite good enough to win. He was at no time annoyed by any of Barton's mannerisms. His game was good but it was not a winning game. Excellent but submissive, about sums it up. Barton's game on the other hand was sometimes ragged and sometimes brilliant, but always aggressive, dominant.

It was while Freddie was losing to Barton that Aileen Macklyn visited the links and first saw the boy.

Aileen Macklyn was twelve months younger than Freddie in the time that is measured by years, but at least his grandmother in point of real world knowledge. Her father was an Irish actor of parts and her mother an English grand-opera singer. The stage had been home to Aileen from birth and it had not spoiled her. When the stage has an utterly charming and lovely young person like Aileen Macklyn from early childhood up and doesn't spoil her it very definitely does just the opposite. At the time Aileen first saw Freddie Jamieson she had been a legitimate Broadway star for three years and even that had not spoiled her. So you can see that Aileen was made of very wonderful stuff.

Women who saw Freddie Jamieson for the first time usually made some comment, such as: "Isn't he dear!" or, "Isn't he handsome!" He was good looking. No doubt about that! And everything the boy did or said expressed a persistent, vague wistfulness that added the appeal of a child to the attraction of a man. But Aileen Macklyn didn't say he was dear or handsome or anything of the sort. The soft color richened her cheeks as she looked at him and her large gray eyes grew misty.

She said: "Oh!" softly and with an expression as though she had received some shock that hurt, pleased and astonished her all at the same time. She said, "Oh!" And then after a little time again in the same tone, "Oh!"

When he was beaten she cried a little, just a little, very quietly, and wiped her eyes and demanded that her escort maneuver her an introduction to the defeated young man. And when she met him she didn't talk much, just looked at him and listened. And to the bewilderment of those who knew Freddie intimately she had something to listen to. For Freddie Jamieson in the seven years he had been playing in the big championships had been growing increasingly silent and taciturn. But he talked to Aileen Macklyn from the first. Talked eagerly and long; and the girl listened eagerly and watched him always with a peculiar expression, as though she were very happy and a little hurt; and also as though she beheld something that was hidden from the eyes of others and was much astonished that the world was blind to the thing she saw.

Their courtship was as strange as it was brief. On the afternoon of the second day

after they met they followed a match part way around the course, fell behind the gallery and seated themselves in the green quiet of a little wood. And there Freddie's heavy heart came out of him in words.

"There must be something wrong with me," he said miserably. "I must be yellow. I can play this game better than any of the men who beat me at it. I'm not boasting when I say that. I can, and yet I never win anything big." And he told her then all his early struggles with his temper, of the keen agony of that humiliating time when he had conquered it and of his futile struggle to play a winning game since that time. "There must be something awfully wrong with me," he repeated. "Everybody's disappointed in me. I ought to win and I can't. I wonder if it's going to be like that with everything I try—with business and everything."

He raised his eyes to the girl's face and found it wet with tears. She didn't speak, just reached out her arms and kissed him.

He blurted out a proposal and she laughed and cried at the same time and hugged him close and said: "Try and get away from me."

And then a moment later she put her chin in the palm of her hand and sat quietly staring into the distance.

"What's your father going to say about it?" she asked.

"I don't know," Freddie said doubtfully. "I won't say that I don't care, because I do; but of course it doesn't make any difference."

"Of course not," she agreed. "And what do you suppose I'm going to say to your father?"

Freddie stared. She laughed and rumped his hair. "You don't know, do you?" she teased him; and then suddenly serious, with a harsh note in her voice; "but I do. I know what I'm going to say to him, and the quicker it's said the better."

"He's been tied up in Chicago in business all week," Freddie said. "He'll be in town to-night. We'll go see him as soon as he comes in."

"I'll go see him," she corrected him firmly. "Now, Freddie, no arguments," she went on sternly as he started to protest. "I want to introduce myself to your father and talk to him alone before you say anything to him about the matter. Please, Freddie! It's the first thing I've asked of you since

we've been engaged. You won't deny me, will you?"

Her face broke into a mischievous smile. "You might as well grant my request, because it won't do you a particle of good not to. I'll go ahead and see him, just the same."

"But I don't see——" Freddie began to protest again.

"Of course you don't see," she agreed, dimpling at him mischievously, "but I do. I see very plainly. That's why I'm going to your father alone."

The harsh note crept back into her voice. "He doesn't see either, Freddie, but if he has eyes in his heart I'm going to open them."

J. Stuart Jamieson was very much astonished and not a little delighted when Aileen Macklyn called on him. His astonishment increased and the delight abated with the utterance of her first words.

"I've come to see you about Freddie," she said bluntly.

Mr. Jamieson's smile vanished and a hard look came into his face.

"I'm going to marry him some time," Aileen went on calmly, "and I want to talk it over with you."

"We'll talk it over," Mr. Jamieson agreed shortly, "but as to your marrying him some time—well, I'll have something to say about that."

"You've had a good deal to say about everything Freddie's done all his life," she retorted spiritedly. "Are you at all proud of the mess you have made of him? Yes, that's what I said. A mess! You have drummed it into him from the time he was a mere child that his golf—a game, just a game—is the measure of his success. You have made that the standard that he gauges himself by. You brought him up to think of that as the all-important thing in his life and then you fix it so that he couldn't succeed!"

"I fix it so he couldn't succeed!" Jamieson repeated.

"Exactly. His temper was the best thing he had. You could have taught him to use it. Instead of that you shamed it out of him; and when you had shamed him into discarding it, instead of teaching him to turn and make use of it, you fixed it so he couldn't win."

Jamieson shrugged. "All this is rather beside the question, isn't it?" he asked. "You come here and announce that you're

going to marry my son some day and immediately branch off into an attack on the way in which I have had the boy taught to play golf. I fail to see what golf has to do with it."

"Thanks to the importance that you succeeded in having the game play in Freddie's life it has everything to do with it," said Aileen. "You don't want me to marry your son; do you?"

"I know nothing of you besides your professional reputation," Mr. Jamieson said, "but—well, no, I don't. I certainly do not."

"Why not?"

"There are a number of reasons."

"And most of them don't amount to much," said Aileen calmly. "Do you think I'd be a hindrance to him?"

"I do," said Mr. Jamieson.

"Good!" said Aileen. "Your measure of the boy thus far has been his golf. You've had him all his life and he's a loser. I told you I was going to marry your son some day. I am; but I'll tell you this—I'm not going to marry him until he wins this championship thingamiddie, what do you call it, the National Amateur? Yes. I'm not going to marry him until he wins that and until you admit that I'm the one who helped him win it after you had failed."

She rose and took up her wraps.

"That's all, Mr. Jamieson. Good morning."

"Well, I'll be damned!" said Jamieson, staring after her. "I wonder where Freddie is."

The next day he wondered still more where Freddie was. Wondered with a very definite fear of loss in his heart.

A week later he got a letter from his son, postmarked Chicago. "I'm leaving here tonight," the letter said. "Don't worry about me, dad, and don't try to find me. I'll meet you next year at the National Amateur Championship at the Skokomis Club on Long Island."

Mr. Jamieson held out in bitter silence until January, and then called on Aileen Macklyn, who was playing in New York in the English comedy, "Fathers." She met him all smiles and friendliness.

"He'll be on hand for the National Championship next summer," she assured him. "Don't worry, Mr. Jamieson."

"Won't you tell me where he is?" Mr. Jamieson begged.

She shook her head. "He's in training to win," she explained. "I'm sure you'd interfere with his program if you should know where he is."

"Let's be sensible," Jamieson begged. "Is it a matter of so much importance whether he loses or wins a golf match?"

"It's a matter of absolutely no importance," Aileen said surprisingly. "That's why he must win—to find that out."

"I don't understand," Mr. Jamieson said humbly.

"I know you don't," said Aileen, "but if I let you interfere with my plans for Freddie this year, you probably never would understand—and you must, you see." She smiled and held out her hand. "We're going to be good friends, aren't we?"

Jamieson colored and managed a laugh. "I wouldn't be surprised," he confessed. "I wouldn't be surprised at any development in any situation in which you were involved. Are you and Freddie married?"

"Certainly not!" she exclaimed. "I told you I wouldn't marry him until he won the championship. I meant it."

"Well, I'll be damned!" said Stuart Jamieson. "I beg your pardon, Miss Macklyn, but that is precisely what I mean and I repeat it: I'll be damned!"

Stuart Jamieson was waiting at the Skokomis Club on Long Island when Freddie appeared there. Of the two it was the father who was more ill at ease. Freddie greeted his parent gladly and without effusion or any expression of embarrassment.

"Hello, dad!" he said naturally. "I've missed you a lot. How's everybody?"

"Fine," said Mr. Jamieson nervously. "Everybody's all right. You're—you're looking well."

"Feeling fit," said Freddie and turned to greet a friend.

There was much that Jamieson wanted to say to his son but for some reason he was glad to postpone the date of the confidential talk. He couldn't see that Freddie had changed in any way and yet he was acutely aware of the difference in the boy. There was something disconcertingly mature and confident about him. Something that made the father think it wise to consider carefully just what he should say to his son and when and how it should be said.

Freddie qualified easily with one hundred and forty-nine, shooting his customary game of good colorless golf. Mr. Jamieson

watched his son's game carefully and was unable to see that it was better or worse, that it was different in any way from what it had been the year before. He met Aileen Macklyn among the gallery that followed Freddie. She greeted him without restraint and talked with him as casually as though he had been any one of a score of casual men friends. The subject that was uppermost in the mind of each was not mentioned.

Young Freddie had the best of the luck in the draw and managed to win his matches through to the finals without in the least extending himself. And in the finals he was pitted against his old enemy Chet Barton. Barton was jubilant. He knew that no matter what his luck or form might be on that final day he would beat Freddie Jamieson; knew that he would not have to have the game to beat the young fellow, but need only work on him with word and gesture and expression until he broke.

He was at the tee first and stood waiting for the boy, grinning elatedly and figuring the best way to start his assault upon his opponent's morale. He saw Freddie emerge from the locker room and start down the slope toward the first tee, saw him and felt a premonitory chill of apprehension. For the Freddie Jamieson he saw approaching was not the Freddie Jamieson he had played and beaten. Not the quiet, overserious, wistful boy he knew so well. It was a vivacious, loud-talking, hearty-laughing Jamieson, walking beside a friend and acting almost boisterous, a happy, nonchalant, care-free Jamieson, apparently unaware that he was again at the beginning of the great test which he had so constantly failed to meet.

As Freddie came through the gallery and stepped on the tee he granted Barton a perfectly indifferent nod. Barton grinned meanly and meaningly in answer but the grin was an effort to him. He was puzzled and a little bit scared. He had never seen Jamieson act this way before. He wondered if the boy had been drinking. He edged toward him and spoke in a low tone.

"Better luck this time, Freddie," he said. "You've waited long enough to deserve it, God knows."

He looked hungrily for the hurt look that should come into the boy's eye and was conscious of a flurry of panic in his heart at the unexpected result of his speech, for Freddie turned and laughed at him.

Laughed merrily, happily, insultingly. Laughed and turned away to nod and wave to a friend in the gallery.

Barton drove and drove badly. His ball hooked to the left into some nasty rough. He was keenly aware that Jamieson had not watched the shot. For some reason it angered Barton to know that his opponent was unaware of his advantage from the tee.

Freddie teed up his ball and very deliberately wiped off his hands. Then he saw an acquaintance in the gallery and took time out to nod and smile; then he drove long and straight down the middle of the course; drove without any preliminary effort, without so much as addressing the ball once; drove with a casual manner that had something of contempt in it. As he walked down the fairway with the gallery streaming around and behind him he whistled softly to himself. It was a very low whistle, but Chet Barton heard it.

A little way from the tee Freddie caught step with Barton. "Been playing much this year, Chet?" he asked casually.

"Quite a lot," Barton replied.

It was an easy thing to say yet Chet couldn't for the life of him say it in a natural tone. This angered and humiliated him.

He veered sharply to the left on his way to where his ball lay in the rough and saw out of the tail of his eye that Freddie Jamieson half stopped with a surprised expression, as though he was wondering where Chet was going. Then he saw Freddie smile very slightly, as though just realizing that Chet was off in the rough with his drive; as though he were realizing and relishing it.

Barton played his niblick from the rough and was far short of the green with his second, while Freddie was well on in two. Then Barton overran the green with his mashie, was short coming back and picked up, conceding the hole. He tried to do this with his customary insulting manner of superiority, as if he would say by his action, "Oh well, accidents will happen, but of course you and I and every one watching knows that it was an accident."

As he picked up Jamieson's ball and tossed it to him, he grinned and said: "I played it out."

Freddie looked at him and appeared to consider this seriously. He lifted his eye-

brows and shrugged. "Yes?" he said with an interrogative inflection, and then nodded. "You might." And a moment later Freddie was smiling and waving to another acquaintance in the gallery.

When Barton drove from the second tee he was both furious and scared. He drove badly again and was agonizingly conscious that the gallery was murmuring over his exhibition, exchanging amazed looks, wondering what ailed the veteran and beginning to suspect him of the very thing he was guilty of, namely, a completely miserable break.

He lost the second hole and the third. At the fourth, a par four, they were both on in two. Barton felt by the stimulus of those two excellent shots that he had gained control of himself and yet had a good opportunity to come back. It was Freddie's first putt, he being some ten feet from the cup while Barton was about six feet distant.

Freddie stepped up to his ball with a hint of a smile on his face, tapped it smartly with almost no preliminary sighting and dropped it clean in the hole for a birdie three. As the gallery applauded, Freddie smiled broadly, stooped and picked up Barton's ball, conceding a difficult six-foot putt for a half, tossed him the ball and walked away toward the next tee without looking at him. It was Barton's own trick with added trimmings, a gesture that shouted aloud, "Here little boy, you're having a hard time and up against an awful proposition. I'll give you this to keep your spirits up."

Chet Barton broke. The complete pitiableness of his break recalled to the old-timers the day when young Freddie had gone completely to pieces under the strain of playing against Barton. So pitiable was Barton's breakdown that many of the more sensitive-minded people in the gallery deserted the match, unwilling to be further witness to a man's utter humiliation.

The morning round ended with Barton ten down. The defeated finalist was unable to get himself together during the lunch period and lost the first five holes of the afternoon round. The match ended on the fifth green with Freddie Jamieson fifteen up and thirteen to play. No player in the finals of the National event had ever been so horribly defeated.

Freddie Jamieson had come through at last. The crowd raised him shoulder high and carried him thus back to the clubhouse.

And there, after some of the excitement had died away and Freddie had succeeded in locating Aileen, J. Stuart Jamieson appeared. His first words were spoken to the girl.

"You win," he said briefly, putting out his hand. And then turning to Freddie, "You'll be coming back to take your place in the business, Freddie? At least, after the honeymoon?"

"If you'll have me, dad," Freddie agreed.

"Try and get away from me," J. Stuart Jamieson growled with mock ferocity.

He measured his son with an approving glance.

"Where have you been for the past year, boy, and what have you been doing? Or is that still a secret?"

"No," said Freddie with a little touch of grimness in his tone. "I've been in a stock company out on the Pacific coast, learning how to act."



TAKING ADVICE

IT is pretty well agreed that the man who won't take advice is a wrong-headed fool. After he has come a cropper his well-meaning friends sigh and remark: "Well, I told you so. Now if he had only done what I told him——" If he doesn't come a cropper these same well-meaning friends say nothing and feel hurt.

Taking advice is all right—provided you can pick out the advice that will do you any good. We've an idea that many a failure is the result of taking the sort of advice that doesn't fit.

Walter Hoover, the Duluth oarsman who won the Diamond Sculls in England last summer, had enough confidence in himself to disregard the advice of more experienced men and to go his own way. Perhaps they called him stubborn and wrong-headed. He wasn't. He knew what he wanted to do and why he wanted to do it. Certain time-honored methods of propelling a racing shell through the water might be all right for most people, but they weren't the best for Walter Hoover. Therefore he cut away from the guidance of coaches and trainers and friends and went on putting into practice his own theories. He ordered a boat that was a little different from all other racing boats. He rowed a stroke that was quite a bit different from other men's strokes. People laughed. Hoover won the American championship. Then he went to England. The Englishmen smiled at his methods. He beat their best men. Then Hoover smiled—he was champion of the world because he had had the courage to disregard advice.

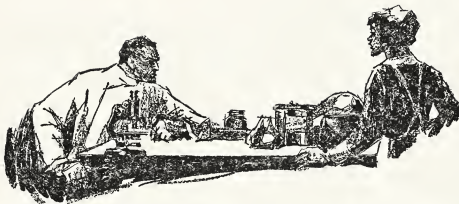


FAME'S CASH VALUE

IT pays to be famous—or even near famous. Mr. David Lloyd George is going to tell the world about his part in the World War and the world is going to pay him something like a million dollars for the privilege of reading what he writes. He's going to qualify for membership in the Good Sports' Club by giving it all to war charities. The German ex-kaiser also is telling the universe all about it and for all publication rights outside of Germany has received \$225,000. The greatest failure in history hasn't said anything about giving any of his profits to charity. Perhaps he needs the money—he's just been married.

Some of the lesser lights of the war have been able to turn their connection with it into cold cash. Ludendorff received \$123,000 for the right to publish his story outside of Germany. Mr. Joseph Tumulty is said to have made \$100,000 from his book on "Woodrow Wilson As I Knew Him." Doctor Arthur N. Davis, the ex-kaiser's American dentist, made \$20,000 on a series of articles on his patient. Brand Whitlock's "Story of Belgium" brought him \$40,000; Admiral Sims' story of the war added \$25,000 to his bank account and Major Eddie Rickenbacker's articles on war aviation netted him \$10,000.

General Grant's "Memoirs" brought a half million dollars to his family and the stories of other Civil War leaders made some profits for their writers. Colonel Roosevelt's story of his Spanish-American War experiences, "With the Rough Riders," also was profitable to its author.



The Carlton Theater Mystery

By Ralph Durand

Author of "Set a Thief—," "The Mallard Diamond Case," Etc.

Mayo, the revivalist-detective, puts a question—"Is murder ever justified?"

THE coroner's jury returned a verdict that the famous dancer, Irene St. George, had been murdered by some person unknown and Detective Simmonds' superior officer told him to get busy and find the murderer.

Simmonds resented being set a task that was outside his own especial line. Burglary was his department. The detection of burglars is an exact science based on precise methods such as the codification of finger prints and the tabulation of personal records. But in murder cases one looks rather for motives, and Simmonds was no psychologist. His superior officer gave him notes of several clues and not one of them, so far as Simmonds could see, was worth a pint of beans. But refusal to undertake the job would have stood in the way of his promotion so, as soon as he had his orders, he hurried away from the criminal investigation department offices at Scotland Yard with every appearance of zeal. As soon as he was out of sight of its windows he began to loiter, walking slowly along the Thames Embankment, pondering how to begin. At Blackfriars he was no nearer a solution of the problem. Acting on a sudden impulse he hailed a taxicab and drove to the lodgings of Mr. Albert Mayo, the famous ex-burglar revivalist preacher.

On several previous occasions Simmonds

had derived help from the ex-convict's unique knowledge of burglary but he had never sought for that help without a certain amount of reluctance. Mayo was too often inclined to show a warm fellow feeling for the criminal and could never be trusted not to help him escape instead of handing him over to justice. Mayo used to say of himself that as a revivalist preacher he was more interested in the saving of souls than in the protection of property, and when he had helped Simmonds in cases of burglary and theft it had always been on the distinct understanding that he was at liberty to search for all the extenuating circumstances he could find in favor of the culprit.

As this particular case was one of murder Simmonds hoped that Mayo would help him without making conditions. But Mayo would promise nothing.

"Go ahead and tell me exactly what happened," he said. "Maybe it wasn't a murder. at all."

"It was murder right enough," answered Simmonds. "Fell dead on the stage, she did, and the doctor said she was poisoned. She was doing her turn when suddenly—"

"What sort of turn? I don't go to theaters."

"I thought every one in London had gone to the Carlton Theater to see Miss Irene St. George's—Gertrude Smethers her real name

is—wonderful bird representation. First she came on the stage in ordinary evening dress and gave imitations of the notes of various birds—thrush, blackbird, skylark and so on. Then she did a lightning change and came on in a skin-tight dress made of the breasts of humming birds and sort of flitted about the stage with limelight playing on her. Beautiful it was. The colors flashed just like jewels. Then she did another quick change and came on in a costume made entirely of osprey feathers and stood still just waving her arms about while different colored limelight played on her. The auditorium was kept very dark so as to show her up well.”

“Some people seem to earn their money pretty easy,” grunted Mayo. “Go on.”

“It was while she was doing that turn that suddenly she gave a jump—like as if a wasp had stung her on the chest, people said—and cried out. The orchestra stopped playing. In half a tick she recovered herself and nodded to the conductor to go on with the music but he hadn’t played more than a bar or two before she fell face downward on the stage and lay like a log. The stage manager came on to the stage as the curtain went down and asked if there was a doctor in the audience. A man in one of the upper boxes showed himself and was on the stage in half a minute. But she was dead almost before he reached her. Anyway there was nothing he could do for her. She was poisoned, he said. He found a pin-prick wound in her chest just above the heart and he said that it was probably this that did it.”

The detective laid on the table a small arrow-shaped pin, not more than two inches long, with a barb at the point and at the other end a tightly packed tuft of white feather.

“Looks to me as if it might be part of her costume that came adrift and pricked her.”

Simmonds slapped his thigh.

“That’s what I say. But Miss Irene St. George’s dresser at the inquest said that she had never seen the pin before. I don’t say I trust her evidence, mind you. She behaved almost as if she was afraid that she might be charged with the murder——”

“That’s nothing,” commented Mayo. “So would you, as like as not, if you had been in her place.”

“Anyway she was so flustered that she

just denied any knowledge of anything. ‘I take my solemn oath I never seen the pin before,’ she kept on telling the coroner and that was all he could get out of her. Besides there was another artiste friend of Miss St. George’s in the wings, Talesa, the Belle of Tahiti, she’s called on the play-bills: she helped her change her dresses and she told the coroner, too, that the pin was no part of the costume.”

“She might easily have missed seeing it,” commented Mayo. “But even so, how could a prick from a little thing like that poison her?”

“That’s where the doctor’s evidence comes in—Doctor Aubrey Buxton of No. 16 Channing Street, he is, but retired from practice. First he said that she was poisoned and that all the symptoms pointed to its being a rare poison called curare. He said that if at any time, even it might be years ago, that pin had been dipped in curare, a prick from it just above the heart was enough to kill in a couple of minutes. He said that he had often seen poisoned darts exactly like that pin. He told the coroner that he’s a naturalist as well as a doctor and has traveled a lot in foreign parts collecting birds and butterflies and such like. He said that savages use just such little darts as that—always poisoned—to shoot birds.”

Mayo picked up the dart and threw it, aiming at the clock on his mantelpiece. It made a slow, curved, wavering flight and fell in the fender.

“It doesn’t look as if any one throwing this from any other part of the theater could have much chance of hitting any one on the stage,” he said.

“That’s what I say and that’s what the coroner said. But Doctor Buxton said that a savage can hit a small bird with it at thirty paces. They puff them through blow-guns, he said. The coroner asked him what blow-guns are like and he said that they are pieces of bamboo about fourteen feet long. Of course nobody could smuggle a great thing like that into a theater without being seen, so that rules the doctor’s blowgun theory right out of court.”

Mayo took his hat off its peg.

“Let’s go and put that point to him and see what he says,” he said.

At No. 16 Channing Street they were shown into a room full of just such trophies as a traveler naturalist would acquire. In

one corner was a glass case of stuffed multi-colored birds. In another was a rack of guns and rifles. A case of butterflies and beetles was above the mantelpiece. On the walls between the bookcases were spears, boomerangs, canoe paddles, bows and arrows.

"He's traveled a bit and no mistake," said Simmonds as he looked round him.

A scientist called away from his microscope during working hours is seldom inclined to be cordial to stray visitors but as soon as Doctor Buxton learned the detective's errand he said that he was prepared to give any help in his power.

"I want to hear more about your opinion of what this is," said Simmonds, laying the dart carefully on the table. "You say that you think—"

"I don't think. I know that it is an Indian's blowgun dart," said the doctor. "I'll prove it to you."

He took from the wall a long hollow reed.

"This is a blowgun," he said. "I bought it from an Indian in Brazil when I was collecting birds and beetles on the Amazon. The funnel-shaped arrangement is the mouthpiece. The piece of bone at the other end serves the same purpose as the fore sight of a rifle. Now look." He picked up the dart, fitted it into the mouthpiece of the tube, lifted the tube to his mouth, aimed at the knob of a curtain pole and blew. The dart crossed the room so fast that the eye could not follow it and stuck fast in the wood.

"The great advantage of this weapon is that it is absolutely silent," he said, climbing on to a chair to recover the dart. "You may find a dozen birds feeding in a group and shoot one after another without making a sound."

"And you think that the dart is poisoned?"

"I'm sure of it. They all are. If they were not such a small thing would wound without killing. Curare is the poison that the Amazon Indians almost always use. It first paralyzes and a minute later kills. If Miss St. George had been struck with it on the hand or foot a doctor who was on the spot and diagnosed the poison accurately might perhaps have saved her life. But a prick from it so near the heart was bound to kill almost instantaneously."

Simmonds nudged Mayo and winked at

him, with a backward jerk of his head toward the door. Mayo interpreted the gesture to mean that they were wasting time but he had his own ideas as to the courtesy due to a gentleman interrupted during working hours.

"You're interested in birds, doctor?" he said, bending down the better to examine a stuffed ibis.

"Please don't think that I shot those birds for the pleasure of looking at them in a glass case. I am interested more in insects such as those above the mantelpiece. There are two hundred thousand different kinds of insects in the world and with the exception of a very few, such as the bee, they are all deadly enemies to man. Birds on the other hand, are man's great allies. I have never shot a bird except for the sake of examining its crop, in order to ascertain what it had been eating and therefore to what extent it was the friend of man."

"Very interesting, I'm sure," said the detective. "But we must be getting along, Mayo."

As soon as they were in the street again he grumbled at the time they had wasted.

"There's no sense in these experts," he said bitterly. "Once they get an idea into their heads there's no shaking it out. I'm prepared to believe that Irene St. George was poisoned and that it was that feathered pin thing that did it. But how did it get there? Just because it happens by pure coincidence to fit that blowgun arrangement he showed us he jumps to the conclusion that some one shot at her with a blowgun. I grant you that a silent weapon like that would be a good thing to do a murder with but he didn't tell us how in the name of common sense a murderer could smuggle a clumsy thing like that into a theater without the doorkeeper and the program seller and the fireman and everybody telling him he must leave it in the cloak room. It's ridiculous! Talk to him about poisons and he'll talk sense. Ask him a common-sense question like that and he's no more use than a baby."

"If you can't find out how a murder was committed," said Mayo, "you must take a fresh line and ask yourself who had any reason for committing it. Let's go and talk to Miss St. George's manager."

Asked if he knew of any one who had any reason to have a grudge against Miss Irene St. George, her manager, Mr. Tom

Parker, frankly admitted that he knew of scores.

"It's only natural," he said, "that any hard-working music-hall artiste should be jealous of a woman who draws enormous fees for doing practically nothing. Between ourselves Irene, regarded as an artiste, was a first-class dud. She couldn't sing for nuts and her dancing didn't amount to much. All that she had to do was to stand on the stage in her bird costumes, wave her arms about and smile. All that was worth looking at in her show was produced by the limelight effects on her dress."

"But her imitations of birds' notes; they were pretty good," objected Simmonds.

Mr. Parker smiled and took out of the drawer of his writing desk several perforated tin globes, the size of hazel nuts.

"All she had to do was to put these into her mouth one after another and blow. This one gives the blackbird's note; that one the lark's; and so on. She didn't even invent them. But when the poor devil who did invent them showed them to her she was business woman enough to give him ten quid for the patent so as to prevent any one else doing the same stunt. She was more business woman than artiste all the time and she knew just what the public will pay for. People want to see a show that they can talk about when they get home. That's why she made me feed the newspapers with paragraphs about her dresses. The humming-bird dress was made of the breasts of six hundred birds and cost her three hundred pounds. The osprey dress had five hundred plumes in it and she sent a man to Central Africa on purpose to get 'em for her. The public likes to hear that sort of thing. It makes it think it's getting its money's worth."

"Is there any one who had any special reason to have any grudge against her?" asked Simmonds.

"There's Talesa—the Belle of Tahiti, as she is called on the program. She used to be star at the Carlton but when Irene made her contract she stipulated that her name should be printed in the biggest letters on the bills and stuck up in colored lights over the theater door and so on, so that poor Talesa had to take a back seat. But Talesa's a good sort. She wouldn't hurt any one. Then there was the chap that invented those whistles that first gave her the idea of doing the bird representation stunt. He

never got anything out of it except the ten pounds at the first go off. The other day he wrote to her, said she had made pots of money out of his invention and asked her to lend him a few pounds because his wife was ill."

"And did she?"

"Not she. She never let me answer begging letters. Here's his letter, if you like to read it."

"I'll keep that," said Simmonds briskly tucking it into his pocketbook. "What sort of performance did the Tahiti woman do?"

"Native dances in native costume. She's a pure-bred South Sea Islander—or gives herself out to be. I dare say it's true. She's got a darkish skin and——"

"This Doctor Buxton—he had a good view of what happened, hadn't he?" asked Mayo casually. "Wasn't he in one of the upper boxes? I thought so. And the auditorium very dark."

Simmonds was scribbling a note in his pocketbook.

"Thanks, Mr. Parker. That'll do for the present. I dare say I'll have to bother you again later."

"One moment, Simmonds," said Mayo. "Could you show us some of Miss St. George's press notices, Mr. Parker?"

"Heaps," said the manager, opening a scrap album. "Here's a full-length photo of her feeding the pigeons in Trafalgar Square. Here's a portrait of her in her aviary at Chiswick. Here's an article in *Our Pets*—it is signed by her, but I wrote it, of course—saying how fond she was of birds. All bluff to catch the public eye, of course. She never had any use for a bird off the stage except on her plate. And of course there's hundreds of press critics saying how beautiful her show was and how wonderfully she imitated birds."

"What about unfavorable press notices?" asked Mayo. "It's those that I'd like to see."

"She never let me keep any. There weren't many to keep. You see few newspaper advertising managers would let their editors queer their pitch by inserting unfavorable notices of a show advertised in their columns, and the Carlton Theater advertises in all the dailies and nearly all the weeklies."

Mayo seemed inclined to follow up the subject but Simmonds dragged him away impatiently.

"Talesa's our mark," he said eagerly as soon as they were out of earshot. "A star artiste shunted out of her place! There's your motive. You remember what the poet says, 'Hell has no fury like a woman who's been made a boob of,' or something to that effect. How did she get hold of the poisoned dart? She used to use it bird catching when she was running wild in Tahiti or whatever the place is called. How did she stick it into Irene St. George? Why, she was with her in the wings, pretending to be as friendly as you please and helping her change quickly from one dress to another. What was to stop her from slipping the pin into Miss St. George's corsage in such a way that it was bound to prick her as soon as she started waving her arms about? Oh, she's our mark all right! Come along to the theater and have a talk with the dresser."

"You go," said Mayo. "I'm going to follow a line of my own."

Mayo's fame as a preacher and notoriety as an ex-convict had gained him a large and varied circle of acquaintances ranging from the proprietors of sixpenny doss houses at one end of the social scale to cabinet ministers at the other. Among them was an editor with whose politics he profoundly disagreed and for whose personal character he had immense respect. A man, he felt certain, who would place his own ideas of honesty above the expedience of truckling to advertisers. The editor of the *Sentinel* proved to have emphatic views about Miss Irene St. George's performance.

"I won't say anything about the woman," he said, "because convention demands that one must not speak ill of the dead until after the lapse of a certain amount of time. But her performance was vulgar and meretricious to the last degree and the worst of it was that she set a fashion to women with as little conscience as herself. I've a letter here that I should have published in my next issue if she wasn't dead that will give you an idea of the harm she did. Read it."

Mayo took the galley proof offered him and read:

THE COST OF A DANCER'S DRESS.

To the Editor of the *Sentinel*.

A paragraph that has recently appeared in several newspapers informs the public that a dress made of humming-birds' skins, worn by Miss Irene St. George of the Carlton Theater, cost 300 pounds. Let me examine the statement from a scientific standpoint. The cost of a

humming bird is merely the price demanded for its skin by the man who shoots it. But this has no relation to its value. In one day a single humming bird will destroy many hundreds of noxious insects. The fecundity of insects is so enormous that in the case of some species a single pair would have sixty million descendants in one year if nature had not provided birds to keep them in check. Without the aid of birds man could no more restrain the increase of insects than he could prevent the tide from rising. And yet men destroy countless thousands of their best friends for no more reasonable purpose than that their feathers shall adorn the hats of thoughtless women. Man's war against birds is most ruthlessly waged in tropical countries because it is there that birds' plumage—notably that of the humming birds—is gayest. It is in the tropics, therefore, that man has to pay most dearly the penalty for this slaughter. There ticks kill the cattle; the cotton worm and the beetle destroy the plantations. Millions of acres won from the forest by man's toil are returning to forest again through man's greed and stupidity. Miss Irene St. George's dress may have cost her 300 pounds. Its cost to mankind, taking into consideration the example she sets to the hundreds of women who every night crowd to see her, might without exaggeration be estimated in millions. But we must consider the cost of her dresses not in terms of money alone, but also in that of human lives. It is announced that one of her dresses is decorated with five hundred osprey plumes. Osprey plumes are obtained from the egret. The egret is man's most powerful ally against the terrible disease of sleeping sickness, for it preys on the tsetse fly that conveys the disease to man. Last year the egret heronries in one particular district of central Africa were raided by an osprey-plumage hunter, said to have been in the employment of Miss St. George herself. Sleeping sickness had been unknown before in that district, but it followed in his wake, and within a year after the egrets in that district had been exterminated more than a hundred helpless Africans died a lingering and painful death.

I am, sir, yours truly,

AUBREY BUXTON, M. D., F. L. S., F. E. S.

Mayo handed the letter back with a sigh. "I wish you could have published it," he said.

He went from the *Sentinel* office to Scotland Yard where he found Simmonds in a less confident mood.

"I was wrong about that woman Talesa," he said. "After I left you I went back to Doctor Buxton and asked him whether the natives in Tahiti use blowguns and poisoned arrows. He says they don't and that particular poisoned dart can't have come from anywhere but Brazil. And since I got back to the office I've looked up Talesa's record on our files. Her real name is Hopkins, she was born in Hammersmith and the near-

est she has ever been to Brazil—or Tahiti either, for that matter—is Coney Island, New York.”

“Got your eye on any one else?” asked Mayo.

“Yes, I’ve discovered that a man came to the stage door on the night that Miss St. George was killed and asked to see her. He bribed the doorkeeper to let him in and then squared the call boy to let him carry up a tankard of beer that she had ordered. They started rowing and she rang her bell and had him chucked out. I expect we’ll find that it was the inventor chap that had tried to beg from her. My theory now is that that prick she got is just one of those coincidences that sometimes happen to throw one off the scent. I don’t suppose the pin was poisoned at all. It was just part of her ordinary get-up that had come unfastened and the dresser was too scared to admit it. My view is that Doctor Buxton saw she was poisoned and saw she was pricked, and, because he had seen poisoned arrows something like that pin, put two and two together and jumped at the wrong conclusion. I’ll have the pin examined by our analyst of course but, you mark my words, it was the beer that was poisoned. At any rate I’ll find the fellow that carried it up to her and he’ll have to give an account of himself. Have you hit on anything?”

“Not yet,” said Mayo.

He left Scotland Yard and turned up Whitehall, walking slowly, deep in thought. At Charing Cross he turned into a gun-maker’s shop.

“Can you tell me,” he asked, “what sort of weapon a naturalist would use to shoot small birds with—something that wouldn’t make any noise?”

“An air gun or air pistol,” replied the salesman, promptly taking a specimen of each from a case and laying them on the counter. “They are quite noiseless.”

“And what sort of projectile does one use”—Mayo picked up an air pistol, almost identical in size with one that he had seen in Doctor Buxton’s study—“in this one, for instance.”

“That one would take a bullet about the size of—”

“Ah! It couldn’t fire something in the nature of a dart, could it—or an arrow?”

“Oh, yes, it could, provided that the feather of the dart fitted the barrel so as to give the compressed air something to drive

against. We have no such darts in stock but we could make them to order.”

“Thanks,” said Mayo, laying down the air pistol. “I didn’t want to buy but I have a reason for asking. Hope I haven’t troubled you.”

“No trouble at all! Good aft.,rnoon.”

Mayo left the shop and walked toward Channing Street, still more slowly than before.

Doctor Buxton was bending over a microscope when a maid announced Mr. Mayo. He swore under his breath, annoyed at the disturbance, but at sight of Mayo he sprang to his feet and pushed a chair forward solicitously. The ex-convict’s face was a dull gray. Beads of sweat were on his forehead. The doctor could see that he was laboring under some severe nerve strain.

“Feeling ill?” he said. “No. Don’t trouble to answer. I’ll give you something that will help you to pull yourself together.”

Mayo lowered himself slowly into the proffered chair.

“I know who—who killed—that woman,” he said slowly and with difficulty. “No one else knows—yet. It is terrible—to have—fellow creature’s—life in one’s hands.”

Doctor Buxton went to a cupboard, busied himself among some bottles and brought Mayo a graduated glass half full of a pale-pink liquid.

“Drink this,” he said. “It’ll pull you round.”

Mayo took the glass with a hand that shook.

“I know—who poisoned—”

“But that isn’t poison,” said the doctor. “It’s only bromide—on my honor.”

Mayo lifted the glass to his lips. It clattered against his teeth and he spilled some drops of it but he managed to swallow the greater part of the draft. He put the glass down and gradually the color came back to his face.

“I’m better now,” he said. “I’m under a terrible strain. My conscience is troubling me. The police don’t yet know who poisoned that woman. But I know. It rests with me to denounce him or to warn him to get out of the country. If I do the one I condone a murder. If I do the other I shall cause to be hanged a man who perhaps—Doctor Buxton, is murder ever justifiable?”

Doctor Buxton shrugged his shoulders.

Mayo noticed that his face, too, was haggard and drawn and that he spoke like a man who is utterly weary.

"I'm a scientist, Mr. Mayo," he said. "Not a lawyer."

"I'm no lawyer either. I don't hold with the law—not always, that is. They call me the criminal's friend. I was a criminal myself once. Without God to help me I may be a criminal again some day. I have labored to reform criminals. Sometimes I have helped them to escape from the law; sometimes I have helped the Scotland Yard people to catch them; according to what my conscience told me. But this business—this is murder."

Mayo leaned suddenly forward in his chair and looked at the doctor with flashing eyes.

"Is murder ever justifiable?" he demanded.

Doctor Buxton pressed his hand wearily across his face. The quietness of his manner contrasted strangely with Mayo's excitement.

"I must leave it to your own conscience," he said.

"Then for Heaven's sake give my conscience something to go upon. Tell me. Why did you murder Miss St. George?"

"You know that I murdered her?"

"Yes. What you told me about the value of birds to man set me thinking. The rest was a matter of following up that hint. I have seen the letter you wrote to the *Sentinel*. You shot the poisoned dart at her with an air pistol from one of the upper boxes."

"I thought that you knew, when you came into the room just now. I could have given you poison just now instead of bro-

mide. That would have given me a few hours' start of the police."

"I thought of that. But I wasn't afraid. I know men. Besides you hid nothing from the detective and myself. You made no attempt to throw us off the scent. Tell me, why did you kill her?"

"She was a pernicious woman. The harm she did both directly and by the example she set was incalculable. At first I thought that perhaps she did it out of ignorance. So I wrote and told her of the harm she was doing. I found out her private address and wrote there lest her manager should keep it from her. I told her something that I did not mention in my letter to the *Sentinel*. You read of the outbreak of sleeping sickness that followed in the wake of the hunter who furnished her with osprey plumes. My son, a doctor like myself, had given his life to fighting that particular disease. He hurried to the afflicted district, contracted the disease and died. I thought that if I told her that it might move her. Here is her answer to my letter."

Doctor Buxton took a letter from a file and passed it to Mayo:

Miss St. George is in receipt of Doctor Buxton's communication. She is aware that some people make a lot of sentimental fuss about wearing osprey plumes, and she thinks it's all silly rubbish.

"That letter showed me," continued Doctor Buxton, "that I should do mankind a service if I killed the woman. I do not value my own life. As for my good name—I do not care two straws for the approbation of a public so misguided as to suffer that woman to work the harm she did. Whether I hang or not is a matter of indifference to me. It is for the law to decide."

Another Mayo story in the next issue.



THE CARELESS ACTOR

GILBERT MILLER, the theatrical producer, is at nearly all times a genial, engaging and light-hearted fellow. It is only when he rehearses a company in a new play that acid flows through his brain. Then impatience clouds his brow and acrid utterance speeds his tongue.

On one such occasion a scene was ruined by the tardiness of an actor blessed more with Grecian features than American common sense.

"What the ——" began Miller.

"I got a splinter in my finger," the actor excused himself.

"Henceforward then," ordered Miller, "it will be against the rules for you to scratch your head unless you have your gloves on."



Truth on a Spear

By Eleanor Gates and Frederick Moore

Authors of "The Island that Nobody Leaves," "The Daughter of the Cobra," Etc.

A tale of South Sea pirates, skillfully humanized
with rare touches of back-home humor and pathos.

A TRIPLE call, high pitched and weirdly prolonged, sounded from the blackness that was the mangrove-set stretches of the river to port of the anchored schooner.

"U-lool U-lool U-lool!"

Before it ended, Captain Fellson, leaning against the bulwarks on the dimly lighted main deck, was exclaiming in his strongest language, plainly both amazed and appalled; while behind him where, under a tentlike shelter made by stretching tarpaulin over the main boom, his fever-stricken serang and three Malay sailors lay on their mats there was a sudden stirring, and a whispering.

Standing at a little distance from the skipper was the steward of the *Echo*, in white mess coat and white apron. "May I ask what that yelling is, sir?" he inquired respectfully.

"That?" The captain's voice shook. He stepped nearer to the other, staring toward a face he could not see. "It's the head call."

"The head call?"

Fellson lowered his voice cautiously. "Sea Dyaks!" he explained.

"I don't think I understand you, sir."

"Pirates."

"Pirates! And you mean, sir, that in these days they still care about taking heads?"

"Heads and loot."

The steward drew a deep, gasping breath. "You don't really think there's danger, do you, captain?" he asked anxiously. "That they'll try to jump us? Why, we've got a woman aboard!"

The skipper caught the other by the arm. "Henry," he answered, "I've felt uneasy all day. Couldn't get it out of my head that we were being watched. They've caught a glimpse of us anchored in here and they've figured that something has gone wrong aboard. Maybe they saw Platt and our men start upstream in the longboat for the post. Likely, too, they've spied out the sick, forward here, and suspect that we're short-handed. I know the beggars on this coast of Borneo. They strike if they think you're helpless. And I'm afraid we're in for it."

The tall figure of the mate came stalking to join them. "Everything's ready, sir," he reported, keeping his voice low. "Wouldn't you like to have an extra brace of these automatics, cap'n? I got four guns myself and here's four for Henry."

Fellson took the two pistols held out to him. "Wish I'd dropped down the river before sunset," he mourned, "and stood out to sea a few miles! Then I could've given 'em a chase." Now he was talking as if to himself. "But I thought of Platt and

his crew. Also, with the sand bars changing every few hours, I hated to risk the schooner."

Near by a deck lantern was burning dimly. The mate and the steward stepped aside to it and under the tailless mess jacket the latter hastily buckled two cartridge-filled belts, each of which had a pair of pistols hanging in the belt.

Both men were in their late twenties, and both were solidly and powerfully built. But in appearance they contrasted strikingly. Crosby, the mate, had a long, rawboned, sad face, well-browned and divided horizontally by a scraggy black mustache that drooped forlornly over his capacious mouth. His dark hair stuck straight up in a pompadour that accentuated the length of his countenance. On either side of his head big ears lopped forward as if to shield, like bridle blinds, a pair of thoughtful, greenish-gray eyes. A gingham shirt with a large plaid pattern covered shoulders that were bent. A pair of bleached dungarees were turned up in cuffs at the bottom. On feet that were huge he wore coffee-colored cloth shoes.

The table steward had the carriage of a man trained either in athletics or the army, for he carried himself straight, was quick on his feet, and deft with his hands. His jacket, brass buttoned, fitted him with something of the air of a tunic. Under his crisp apron his white breeches were creased smartly to meet white shoes that were immaculate. His clean-shaven face was tanned; but its healthy color was that of the landsman. His brown hair was smooth combed. The eyes giving the pistols a swift examination were gray-blue, grave and comprehending. At the moment their expression was not only earnest but apprehensive.

"Know how t' use a gun?" inquired Crosby.

"I'll do my share if I'm needed, sir."

At that the captain joined them, showing all his large teeth in a swift grin. He was but little older than either of the others—a short, stockily built man with a head covered thickly with tow hair that kept itself in small, tight curls. His full face was burned and wind beaten. Under each pale-blue eye, wrinkle surrounded from much squinting, the little veins close to the surface of the skin made spots of bright red, so that, taken with his yellowish hair, he

had something of the appearance of a big apple-cheeked boy who was only just raising a first small but flaming mustache.

A canvas-topped, black-visored cap was set on the extreme back of his head. On his feet were red socks and native slippers. Between these and the cap was a baggy duck suit much soiled and creased after several days' wear. The coat opened to show a pink shirt that was streaking with perspiration. It had no collar; but a gold stud in its neck band caught the light below an Adam's apple tufted almost gayly to match the fiery hair on his upper lip.

"Good for you, Henry!" he commended heartily. "I been noticing you quite a bit since I took you on at Sydney. I've found you dependable. I feel I can count on you."

"You can, sir."

"I'll have to," Fellson went on grimly. "There's just four aboard that's fit to bear a hand, counting Mr. Hawley, and us three, and not putting much of a bet on the chink cook. Well, if anything breaks loose we're going to have to fight with every ounce of man that's in us or we'll have to say good-by to reaching Singapore and see a swarm of devils take this schooner. And with Miss Haw—"

"U-loo! U-loo! U-loo!"—again, and to port as before, sounded that high-pitched call.

"Lights out!" Fellson whispered the order. Then as the steward shook out the lantern the captain added: "Screw down the cabin ports, Mr. Crosby!"

The steward followed at the heels of the slow-moving mate. At the end of the passage which gave from the main deck he halted for an instant and stared at the floor astonished. To either side, filling large tin pans taken from the galley, were circles of forty-five-caliber automatics. Behind these pans were others which held only cartridges.

"Got a plenty," remarked Crosby, with a glance over one shoulder. He lifted the chimney from the nearest gimbal lamp on the bulkhead and snuffed the flame with his fingers. "We'll leave one light burnin' low," he commented, "but curtain the ports and kill the deadlights."

The steward, recovering from his momentary surprise, hastily shut the ports between the four small cabins opening on the runways to either side of the quarter-deck; turned their bolts tight and drew their cur-

tains. He slipped off his apron, ripped it down the middle, folded each half, and stuffed first one, then the other into the deadlights on each side of the companion-way. And Crosby closed the skylight over the cabin table.

When they returned to where Captain Fellson was standing in the dark the latter was grumbling to himself savagely: "Not a sound did we hear till the moon was smothered by that cloud. Wish the blasted moon would stay out from behind the cursed clouds! And I wish to Heaven I'd never come in here at all! Better to lose two or three Malays with the fever than have all of us cut down with parangs!"

"As the tide's in, sir, there's no chance o' slippin' our cables," Crosby drawled.

"Henry, clear that table off the quarter-deck," instructed Fellson. "And see that Mr. Hawley's fixed for trouble—he might as well know right now what's in the wind for us."

The steward took the three steps at the break of the deck as if they were one. Aft, under an awning that by day warded off a grueling sun was a table at which were set four chairs. Above the table burned a lamp that hung from the awning whipping. And seated in a chair, smoking a cigar and dawdling over his after-supper coffee was one of the *Echo's* two passengers.

John Hawley was the eldest and the largest man on the schooner, a big-framed American, tall but too heavy to be rangy, with a shock of straight gray hair through which he constantly ran his stubby fingers. His dress was that of the prosperous traveler in the tropics—carefully tailored whites worn over a soft-collared silk shirt. His face was big, well-chiseled and florid. From under shaggy brows looked out a pair of blue eyes as kindly as they were keen.

"Excuse me, sir!" begged the steward hurriedly. With Hawley staring at him in unconcealed surprise he brought the four corners of the tablecloth together, made of the linen square a sack into the bottom of which the dishes and silver on the table gathered in a clattering heap, and holding it in both hands swung down the companion-way.

Hawley bent to look after him and chuckled. "Well, that's one way of doing it," he observed dryly. "But why all the hardware trimmings around your waist? Are we going to have a fancy-dress party?"

The steward was back, having set his load just inside the coaming of a cabin door. With two swift motions he folded the table, then put it below with the first load; followed with three of the chairs, and last of all, once more murmuring an apology, caught the chimney from the lamp overhead and pinched the yellow flame of its wick.

Now on the after deck there was no light except a faint shaft coming up through the open scuttle of the companion and the glowing spot which was the end of the passenger's cigar.

"Say, Henry," went on Hawley, all at once showing concern; "what in the dickens is up? And what's all that fancy yodeling I just heard from out yonder?"

"Natives, I believe, sir," answered the steward.

"That why you're all fringed with shooting irons?" inquired the elder man.

The steward glanced sidewise to where, against the rail, was a figure that was only a blur of white. "The captain's compliments," he rejoined, "and he'd like it, Mr. Hawley, if you'd strap on a couple of pistols. You see, sir, now and then the Dyaks along this coast take a notion to raid if they think——"

But without waiting for any further explanation Hawley got to his feet, while his cigar, like a tiny comet, described an arc of fire on its way overside. "Helen!" he called, his voice trembling. "Helen!"

"Yes, dad?"

As she turned and came toward him he caught her wrist and drew her close. The steward was gone below into the main cabin once more and was gathering up half a dozen automatics. Hawley jerked a thumb in his direction. "Henry's getting us a supply of pistols," he told her, striving to show no concern. "There ain't nothing to worry about, a-course, only the captain, he——"

"I know what the danger is, daddy," she interrupted quietly. "A few minutes ago, before the steward came, I was on the main deck and I heard what Captain Fellson said about the Dyaks." Then drawing her arm free of his hold she led the way down the companion.

A slender girl, barely out of her teens, she was a quaint figure as she halted beside the cabin table. Her flaxen hair was parted in the middle and gathered in a soft knot

at the back of her neck, suiting the style of a sleeveless dress which had a tight bodice and a full skirt. Her skin was that clear white which goes with fair hair and dark eyes. Now her eyes, a deep hazel, seemed a jet black as they glowed with excitement and concern. Her lips were pale.

Her father was buckling on a pistol belt, with a slap of his open hands upon the holsters. She addressed the steward. "At the soonest," she asked, "when can Mr. Platt get back with the longboat?"

He kept his look lowered respectfully as he answered. "If the boat found the doctor at the post and was able to turn right around and start back it could reach here about sunup day after to-morrow."

"Thank you."

There was a rattling on the main deck, where the skipper was putting down an armful of rifles. The steward bowed and went out. Then Hawley, his big body double-belted, went to stand in front of his daughter. "To-day," he began grimly, "I cussed my fool head off because we was hung up here in this pea-soup creek, with nothing in sight but monkeys and crocodiles, and the temperature like the inside of Mount Lassen back home. Well, to-night, honey, I got something worth while to beef about. And I'm the one that's responsible for us being in this scrape. Why'd I ever drag you away from your ma and your brother, and fetch you on this crazy trip! God knows, youngster, I wish you was safe back on the San Joaquin ranch to-night, even if you was married to a man I don't like!"

"Don't blame yourself, daddy," she pleaded earnestly. "You did what you thought was best. I've always told myself that, even when I felt terribly unhappy. All my life you've been so good to me. I've had everything a girl could want. You don't suppose I forget all you've done, darling?"

"Helen"—his voice broke—"your old dad was thinking about what was best for you, I says to myself, 'She deserves a first-class husband; not somebody that'll like her money but think he's too fine for her because her folks is plain and ev'ryday.' I wanted you to marry a man who could do something besides bat a little white ball across the grass at some country club, a man who could get down to a regular job and wasn't afraid to dirty his hands. Not a dude!"

She nodded, smiling a little wistfully.

"Yes, I know how you felt," she said. "But you see, daddy, the first time you heard his name——"

"It was so gol-darned fancy!" he protested.

"There's just one thing I'm sorry about," she went on. "I keep wishing that, somehow or other, I could have managed to have you and Lorin meet. Because, daddy dear, you didn't know the kind of a man you were running away from. You were prejudiced simply because you thought he was high-toned, or something. But if you'd had a chance to talk to him——"

"I was stubborn!—oh, yes, I was! Stubborn as a mule! I married the woman I wanted to marry but I wasn't willing even to take a look at the man you picked out. Well, this is what I get for going against you—for not listening to your mother! Aw, Helen, what'll poor mummy say if things go wrong with us to-night! Oh, youngster, I'm punished! I'm punished!"

"Nothing's going wrong," she declared stoutly. "I can't believe it. Captain Felson's just taking——"

"U-loo! U-loo! U-loo!"—the weird cries sounded for a third time. Now they were louder, wilder and—threatening.

Hawley took his daughter by the shoulders and bent his face to hers. "Yes, they're coming after us," he answered. "But, listen, honey: As long as my hands'll hold a gun, as long as my fingers'll pull a trigger, I'm going to fight for you."

The tears swam in her dark eyes. "I love you, daddy."

"My great little daughter! My grand little kid!" He choked, kissed her, then bent and caught up two more automatics from one of the pans.

The captain came pounding in. "Miss Hawley," he cried, "there's a big square box of quinine capsules in my medicine chest. Can you find it?—top drawer under my bunk in my cabin. And give the sick Malays a double dose apiece and a good swig of sherry."

"Yes, captain." She was in his cabin the next moment, striking a match.

"Put something over that white dress," continued the skipper. "And look out for arrows."

"Arrows!" Hawley bellowed it, while the blood surged up his throat, fairly purpling his face. "You don't mean they're beginning!"

"Two've come skipping across the bulwarks already. Poisoned, too, probably. Mr. Hawley, you take station right at the stern rail, will you? And when you fire, be sure you're aiming outboard, so you won't wing some of us—that is, if we're boarded from all sides."

As the skipper turned to go Hawley caught him by an arm. "Fellson!" he said hoarsely, "what about my girl? Ain't there some way we can get her off this ship? Downstream, say, and out to sea?"

Miss Hawley came hursting out of the captain's cabin, the quinine box in one hand, a bottle in the other. "Oh, daddy, I don't want to go!" she cried. "Leave you and the sick? And if anybody's wounded——"

"Can't be done," interrupted the skipper curtly. "Hurry up that companion, Mr. Hawley. If the devils show their noses plug 'em while they're in their boats—don't let 'em start up the side! And you, Miss Hawley, get back in here as soon as you can and stay here and fill magazines. The cook'll collect our empty pistols."

"Yes, captain."

Fellson darted out and went galloping up the deck, the girl at his heels. "Serang!" he shouted. "Permata! Up you get! All of you! Here's plenty *ubat!* and *jin!* Kawal! Daud!" As fast as he jerked each half-naked, turbaned Malay upright she was ready with the medicine and the liquor. Then before quinine or sherry could affect the four but while the excitement kept them upon their bare feet Fellson shoved rifles into their hands. "Serang, you come along me," he ordered. "Mr. Crosby, station your men! Boys, killum Dyak! Killum!"

"*Ail Ail!*" The sick men thrilled to the order which gave them license to slay their hereditary enemies. As the mate called their names and places there was a running patter, each dark figure speeding to take its post.

At a word from the captain the steward carried a couple of rifles to Hawley, who was crouched over the taffrail and peering right and left. "Instead of the automatics, sir," he said, "wouldn't you prefer these guns to start with?" It was as if he were asking the rancher to choose between coffee and tea.

Hawley caught that quiet, conventional note and reacted to it with a sardonic laugh. "Yes," he answered. "Hand me a couple of 'em, Henry—on toast."

Now Miss Hawley was back in the main cabin, kneeling on the red carpet, a trim, dark coat buttoned over her light frock. One by one she was examining the pistols, filling such magazines as she found empty, then loading the weapons and throwing a first cartridge into each breech. All the while she breathed hard and whispered to herself.

Near by, squatted on his thin haunches, was the cook, Moy Lott, a monkeyish little Chinese whose inky eyes, stitched in at their corners, snapped as he watched her; and he grinning his admiration, showing his tobacco-stained teeth and puckering into saffron wrinkles a narrow, bony face that had been dried by years of bending over a hot galley stove.

Outside the schooner was as silent as if it were deserted, for the eight men who were armed for her defense were listening, ears strained, for any sound. Overhead the clouds were thinning and the moon was beginning to clear itself of them, so that darkness was now being succeeded by a partial light which dimly showed the oily, sluggish surface of the river; and showed, too, long ebony walls on either hand, these the thick-set mangroves. To the vessel, carried through air that seemed to have no movement, came the heavy perfume of night-flowering jasmynes.

Suddenly, from every direction, there rose a strange noise. It was indefinite, like the murmurings and gentle lappings of some small stream. Then it grew and resolved itself into the low chattering of many voices. The effect was that of huge swarms of bees.

Next, deep and dull and menacing, and coming from a distance, sounded the *r-r-room, r-r-room, r-r-room* of a gong.

From where he waited on the starboard side of the quarter-deck the skipper grunted. "Starting to work up their nerve," he observed dryly.

A moment later that buzzing changed to a wild roar of shouts—as into sight from upstream and not a quarter of a mile away appeared several long blotches—native proas coming at an angle which would bring them to the *Echo's* bows.

"Canoes!" bawled Fellson. "Straight ahead!" As he spoke he fired, his rifle making a sound in the still, confined air between the tree-studded swamps that was like the crack of a whip. Other rifles joined in—

from the forward part of the schooner and from the waist. Mingling with the fusillade was a steady, metallic *tick! tick! tick!* as the cartridge shells were ejected; while dotting the gloom on deck small flames flashed and went like the lamps of spiteful glow-worms.

The shooting was the signal for which Moy Lott had been waiting. From the galley stove was floating up the odor of burning food. But as he leaped to his feet it was not to go to the rescue of his deserted cooking. Instead he caught up a pan of loaded automatics and darted out. Then, his pig-tail whipping his blouse back, he circled the schooner, to lay fresh weapons handy to the reach of the defending force.

Suddenly the river silvered as the moon drew itself free of the obscuring field of clouds and swam into full sight. At once the proas, which were scarcely fifty yards away, took clear shape; and in them were revealed upright figures. In the face of that storm of lead the canoe fleet came steadily on, with no sound or sight of paddles, with no answering shots or defiant yells, or shrieks of men wounded. And not one of those straight-standing pirates moved.

Even as both this and the dazzling light made clear the startling fact that what appeared to be manned proas were, in reality, only canoe-shaped rafts upon which had been set, at regular intervals, man-high sections of timber, a deafening wrangle of cries and the *krOOK-krOOKing* of scores of paddles, announced the coming of the Dyaks from starboard; when the guns were turned in that direction and a hot peppering of lead descended upon proas packed with dark bodies.

A bedlam of shrieks and shouts and a thin shower of bullets answered. Whereupon the defenders got down to steady work and each man, his rifles now laid aside, from straight above the craft of the enemy began to pump downward a double blast of death.

But the Dyaks did not retreat. At the stern the attacking party split. Four canoes made fast to the schooner's rudder. The remainder ranged both sides of the *Echo*. And as the pirates kept up their rifle fire, shot arrows and threw spears, at the same time they flung grappling irons up the vessel's sides and in such numbers that the white men and the Malays were not able to toss all of these into the water. So that, to right and left at several points along the

bulwarks, wiry, half-clad savages upon whose breasts swung and glittered fighting charms heaved into view, hurled themselves forward and catlike struck the deck with their brown feet.

Others squirmed up the anchor chains and swung their blades in the air as they sprang to a footing, pressed upon by those climbing behind them. But as fast as each Dyak was silhouetted against the shining river, and before any could hack back with a parang, the two Malays forward, firing carefully and at short range, sent the enemy, one after another, prostrate into the scuppers.

Elsewhere, with the shots of the automatics sounding like the violent drumming of machine guns, the Dyaks recoiled before the unbroken stream of missiles, their hope of capturing the vessel gone. Those who did not tumble headlong stumbled back over their dead and wounded; and all at once their attacking cries changed to shrieks of fear. And all the while, from one white man to another, and from Malay to Malay, scuttled Moy Lott, offering to each as quietly as if it were salted rice, his pans of newly loaded pistols.

A bare two minutes and the fight was done. No more of the pirates came over-side but there was a loud splashing everywhere about the schooner as brown bodies went shooting pell-mell into the water and made for their canoes, or for the shelter afforded by the still-clustering rafts. Then both canoes and rafts were immediately propelled in the direction of the screening mangroves.

But as the Dyaks fled, aboard the *Echo* the weapons of five men continued to spurt, taking a deadly toll from among the small black spots all about on the moonlit water—spots that were the bobbing heads of swimmers. The five aimed, too, at the pirates who were pulling themselves into the departing canoes, so that many a one loosed his hold and slipped back into the river.

When the canoes and rafts reached the rim of darkness where the dim, watery aisles of the mangrove swamps began the automatics held their fire. Whereupon the steward, Hawley, and the Chinese, each catching up a razor-sharp parang from among the score or more which had fallen from the hands of dead or wounded Dyaks, hurriedly sliced at the lines holding the grappling irons.

Again there was quiet in the wide stream. The Dyaks scattered with all the softness of a nest of snakes. On board the schooner only a sick Malay grunted with satisfaction and weariness as he dropped himself on his mat.

Then voices—as men got back their breath and wet their lips with the cold tea which Moy Lott came running to fetch them. In the main cabin, a brace of pistols falling from his big hands, Hawley was holding his daughter in his arms.

"Aw, my baby!" he sobbed. "Daddy's so glad! So glad!" At the moment she was not the grown daughter whose opinions and wishes had clashed with his but once more his little child, come to him for comfort. Clinging to him she murmured her gratitude for their deliverance.

Hawley had been only slightly wounded. From the rounding of his right jaw had been clipped a piece of skin the size of a dollar. The cut was scarcely deep enough to bleed. "One of them darned spears got me," he explained. And allowed the angry patch to be touched with an antiseptic.

Others had been far less fortunate. The steward was wholly unharmed. But as he began a search of the deck he came upon a prostrate figure in a plaid gingham shirt. Beside a very heap of Dyaks lay the mate, at the point where one anchor chain came through the hawse pipe. He had been cut down.

The steward made a second discovery which seemed at the moment hardly less of a catastrophe than the death of Crosby. On the quarter-deck, beside the looped wheel, he found the captain, stretched prone. A pistol was still grasped in each hand; but Fellson was so injured that he could move only his head and arms.

"I'm afraid my back's hurt, Henry," he announced calmly. "Picked up a bullet, I think, just as the gang went. I'm not suffering, though. Get me into this chair, will you? Well, this certainly is bad luck! Traders've been coming in here for the last ten years without meeting up with trouble."

Hawley and his daughter joined them, the latter bringing brandy, and the wounded skipper was carefully lifted. Then the steward turned to the girl. His hair was wildly disheveled. His coat had been ripped straight down the back by the point of some sharp weapon, and hung together by a few threads at the collar. "Miss Hawley," he

said, "I hope you'll keep off the deck till I've cleared things up a bit. There are some sights you mustn't see."

She answered almost pleadingly. "But I want to look after the sick men. I won't look at anything else—honest!"

At that the rancher fell to laughing almost crazily. "Let her have her own way, Henry!" he cried. "Lordy, kid, but you're a wonder! Some girl, I'll tell the jungles!" The strain broken he went round the corner of the cabin trunk and sank down on the steps of the runway.

"What's the matter with him?" demanded the skipper, who seemed as alert and strong voiced as usual. "Don't bother with me, Henry. I'm a little stunned, that's all. Get him busy. He's got the hysterics."

"Hysterics, your grandmother!" retorted Hawley. "I'm just laughing at that youngster of mine. Who says an eddication makes a girl helpless? Who says it puts kid gloves on a woman? Christopher Columbus, what a fight! And the way I shot! Me, that ain't touched a gun in fifteen years! Gosh, how I threw the pills into 'em! I must've killed a dozen!"

He took a gulp from the brandy bottle, then went with the steward to help with the clearing of the main deck. The quarter-deck needed no clearing. On it not a single Dyak had been able to get footing, though over the taffrail, tied to the rudder and dragging at their lines, were four of their long, narrow craft, constructed out of planks, after the old war type.

The rancher sobered almost to the point of tears when the steward whispered to him the news of Crosby's death. But there was no time for sorrow or regrets. The two lifted the body of the mate, laid it upon a square of tarpaulin and covered it. They looked about for the Malay sailors next. Only three of these had returned to crawl under the sun shelter. Burong, the serang, was not to be found.

"Probably got pulled overboard," hazarded the steward solemnly.

Of Dyaks there were nearly a score. Seven were in the bows where Crosby had died. Of these, one was alive and struggling to drag himself free of the bodies that held him down. He had a bullet in either arm and a third in the thigh; had bled profusely and was weakening. Even as the white men extricated him and helped him to stand his feet went from under him.

From his dress, he was a leader. His loin cloth was gayly patterned and as the steward held the deck lantern close to examine the body the heavily beaded parang sling glittered in the yellow light. About the upper part of his body was a jacket made of the skin of an orang-utan, between the open front of which was a small breast-plate of fancifully perforated tin. His legs were bare.

Tied upon his long, coarse black hair was a bright-colored skullcap in which were thrust long gaudy feathers. From his left wrist, at the end of beaded strings, dangled tufts of human hair. Lying in the brilliant moonlight, big-lipped, symmetrical, and serpent-eyed, his face scarred from old fights, his lips protruding, he made a savage picture.

Hawley shook a finger at him. "I'm darned glad I didn't git a peep at you before I got into my stride with the forty-fives," he told him. "My son, you'd plumb paralyzed me!"

When they had carried the Dyak out of reach of a weapon, and tied his ankles, they made short work of the unpleasant business of dropping the other six Dyaks into the slack water about the *Echo's* bows. Other dead pirates were strewn along both sides of the deck, their bodies sprawled languidly as if they had just thrown themselves down to rest. Four were to port, seven to starboard, making a total of seventeen known killed. While Hawley and the steward disposed of the eleven, circling from stem to main cabin and back, went Moy Lott, a lone lookout. As he trotted he peered and grunted and chuckled.

On the quarter-deck there seemed nothing that Miss Hawley could do save to keep the captain company. "Funny about me," he told her. "For some reason I never felt better in my life. Not a twinge and my mind's clear as a bell. But I seem to be dead from the waist down."

She leaned over him anxiously. "Maybe a nerve's been injured in your back," she answered.

"Something like that. Well, it was a good bet that one of us would get hurt." But much of his cheerfulness was pretended, for he had asked the steward to send Mr. Crosby and knew from the evasive answer in the presence of the girl that things had gone wrong with the mate. "I tell you, Miss Hawley, you made it easy for us men

during the fracas—the way you kept your head! and helped us with the loading!"

She laughed. "I never realized before to-night," she answered, "how good a pistol could look, or a soup plate full of cartridges."

"That's what saved us," he declared. "All the automatics we could use and every one of them clean and ready. But I'm hoping we won't have to use 'em again. There's a Dutch steamer about due in here. When she shows up we're safe."

"Why did they yell before they came?" she asked; "and pound a gong? I should think they'd rather sneak upon us."

"They yell because they just can't hold in their feelings. They'd pass out if they couldn't gloat over the murders they mean to do. Also, they have a notion that hooting and gong pounding scares the enemy so bad that he isn't able to fight."

It was the rancher who took over Moy Lott's self-assigned job of watching the river when the Chinese hurried to the galley to make coffee and fry hot cakes. The steward returned to the captain and broke the news of the mate's death.

"Poor Tom Crosby!" Fellson said quietly. "And Burong gone, too. Well, that leaves us cut to the bone for help and you'll have to take the mate's place, Henry, till Mr. Platt gets back. I doubt if that gang over in the swamps'll come back on us to-night. But we must be ready in case they do, so get yourself a bowl of that coffee that's boiling—then go below and break out more ammunition and fill up the plates and pans. Miss Hawley'll do the loading. And, Henry, we've got to hold out till Mr. Platt comes back."

He was carried down into the main cabin and his wound examined. A missile had struck him in the back, at the waist line. It had not gone deep, for with his finger tips the steward was able to locate it a little to one side of the spine. Despite the captain's protests that there was no hurry, since he was not in pain and not bleeding, the steward urged the immediate taking out of what seemed to be a slug; and with Hawley as an awkward helper made a deft extraction of—a pebble.

With the small incision well antiseptized and covered by a gauze pad Fellson was returned to his chair beside the wheel. Then more cartridges were brought and the pistols were cleaned and recharged.

But there was no further use for weapons that night. The Dyaks did not return. Moy Lott and the steward washed down the forecastle head and the main deck with buckets of water hauled overside, gathered together the litter of spears and took away the parangs. Last of all the Dyak leader was sent, feet first, into the gentle current that was now setting downstream, for in those round and glittering eyes the last spark of evil light had gone out.

In the early hours of the morning, with the moon out of sight behind forest-topped hills to the west, and the three Malays still sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, Moy Lott, a kitchen towel bound round his shaven head, left his galley to do lookout work once more. Then Hawley and the steward wrapped in canvas that still figure in gingham shirt and bleached dungarees, and carried it to the quarter-deck; and Miss Hawley held a lantern at Captain Fellson's elbow while the latter read a burial service which ended with the commitment of Thomas Crosby to that same outgoing flood which was bearing his enemies seaward before him.

Following the sad ceremony the skipper urged his two passengers to take a brief rest, this being a time when both could best be spared. Down in the main cabin, as Hawley and his daughter separated, the rancher paid his second tribute to the girl's bravery.

"Helen, blood counts," he told her. "It sure does! And I'll admit, too, that history repeats herself. You know, many a time these last few years I've wondered if there was women who could stand up to danger the way the first American women stood up to it. Well, last night I got my answer. When you was in here, honey, loading Colts as calm, by thunder, as if you was in the factory, I couldn't help but think of how, in 'sixty-six, back in New Ulm, Minnesota, with the Injuns loose and ev'rybody that hadn't been tomahawked penned up in a stockade, my mother, for three solid days and nights, barring a nip of sleep now and then, stood on her feet and run hot lead into molds for bullets, loaded the muzzles of guns—yes and sometimes jerked a musket outen the hands of a dog-tired man and took a pop at the redskins herself!"

She nodded. "I thought of grandmother, too, daddy. As I slipped the shells into the magazines I said to myself, 'Margaret Archer didn't faint.' And so I just made

myself carry on, even when"—shuddering—"I could look out and see the Dyaks."

Her father kissed her. "Same kind of women in the world," he told her proudly, "same kind."

The Hawleys gone, the skipper, wrapped about with a blanket, for the jasmine-scented air was now noticeably cool, lifted a wan face to the steward in the dim lantern light. He was not pale because of pain, for he had not yet suffered any. He was concerned over the likelihood of a second attack.

Following his instructions the steward sent up a number of rockets, these to announce to the native police at the settlement, as well as to the men in the longboat upriver, that the schooner was in distress and needed help. It was also possible that the rockets would be seen out to sea by some passing vessel which might attempt to come upriver with daylight.

"Henry, those black boys'll jump us again," Fellson asserted grimly; "and they'll come before anybody can get to us. Probably what this particular bunch wants most is the schooner. They could hide her in the swamps and use her as a floating storehouse for loot. They'll figure they might as well take her and finish off the job they started. For one thing they won't want to leave a soul alive that can tell on them, and if they want to they can burn the schooner after they've looted. You see, having gone as far as this, they're in for punishment anyhow and the government usually collects its pay with a gunboat.

"Another thing; they're good fighters but bad losers. They'll add up their dead and you can bet the count'll be over eighteen—not to mention the wounded. All that'll put blood in their eye. So if they show up a second time you can depend upon it that they'll be twice as strong and have some new dodge."

The steward shook his head gravely. "I wish we could think up some dodges of our own," he declared.

The captain fondled the rifle lying across his numb knees. "Come daylight," he went on, "they'll reconnoiter. Maybe they know how many men were left aboard when Mr. Platt went. They'll figure they've cut the number down some. They'll watch to find out just how short-handed we are. Of course Miss Hawley mustn't show herself at all. But when the blighters see me here

and only three men moving around they'll guess we're weak enough to attack again. If they swarm us we're gone fish!"

Soon dawn was approaching. The previous morning at sunup a dense steaming mist had swathed river and jungle and veiled every mountaintop. But this day came unshrouded, heralded by the first inquiring cries of birds. The somber peaks far inland turned a royal purple, the eastern sky mingled rose with its gray, the thick river changed to brown, while those mangrove tangles on either hand lightened to a dreary, lifeless green.

Hawley was on deck again, standing beside Fellson. "By thunder!" exclaimed the rancher, "if it wasn't for the boats tied back under us here and that raft stranded down yonder I'd swear Moy Lott's hot cakes had give me a nightmare!"

"Can't see anything that looks like the stem of a proa, can you?" inquired the captain anxiously. "Take the glasses and look. Keep your eye out for a movement. You know, they can't paddle in there—they take hold of the vines and pull themselves along."

"Mangroves, mangroves, mangroves, and just one mean little nipa palm!" grumbled the rancher, describing a slow circle with the binoculars.

"Any monkeys?" the skipper wanted to know. "Any crocodiles or birds?"

"Nothing alive," scolded Hawley. "Couldn't be. Just to look at all them mangrove branches hanging down into the mud is enough to kill even a monkey."

"M-m-m!" breathed Fellson and reached for the glasses. "Nothing alive is a bad sign. The monkeys may get scared away by the crocodiles. But they and the birds've been scared away by canoes that're watching us."

Their attention was caught by a figure aboard—a slender, trig, sailorish figure that emerged from the companion, wearing white trousers, a gray jacket over a soft dark shirt, and a pilot cap set saucily on one ear. Strapped on the jacket was a cartridge belt, from the holsters of which stuck up the boxlike butts of automatics. Also, the newcomer had a clay pipe in his mouth. He halted before the skipper and saluted.

"Pipe all hands!" he began gayly. "Bring down the mizzen mast and so forth!"

"What the dickens is this?" demanded Hawley.

"This, sir," answered the skipper, "is your daughter."

"Strangle me for a Turk if it ain't!" chuckled the rancher. "Figgered for a minute that I'd either gone bugs or was having another dream."

"I'll be blowed if I ever saw a neater lad on any deck!" vowed Fellson, plainly relieved that the girl was in such cheerful spirits and instantly a-grin with admiration. "Say! the Dyaks can look at you if they want to, Miss Hawley, and do some guessing! What are you? The cabin boy?"

"If you'll examine my uniform more closely," she answered, laughing, "you'll see that I'm the gunner's mate. But I'm likely to be several persons to-day. It's Henry's idea. And—look who's here!"

It was Moy Lott, his skinny little body wrapped round with a sarong and his wound-up queue hidden beneath a turban of bright red. He had the folding table and some linen. At his heels, carrying chairs, was a person in faded dungarees and a shirt with a large plaid.

Into the weary eyes of the skipper came the light of hope. "Henry," he began solemnly, "this trick of yours is liable to bilge that gang of pirates. They won't know that poor Tom was killed and they'll see more men aboard than we had yesterday, and they'll come to the conclusion that we've been reinforced during the night from up-river. Say! It'll give 'em the dizzy-wiggles! Maybe they won't dare attack!"

The steward colored with pleasure. "We can have as many new men aboard as you like, sir," he answered.

"A dozen'll be enough, Henry. That's three apiece for the four of you. Mr. Hawley, my lockers are stuffed with duds. Help yourself!"

"It's the slickest bluff ever I see!" marveled the rancher. "A-course the pirates won't know the difference! Henry, you've got what I call 'savvy,' which is just another name for good practical horse sense. And that's what I admire, Henry! That's my style! Not the kind of brains that knows what to say and do at a fancy tea—not dude brains—"

The steward's face took on a still deeper shade. "Oh, that's all right, Mr. Hawley," he hastened to say. "You see, sir, I'd like to get out of this river with a whole skin myself."

"It'll do to tell!" exclaimed the elder

man. "But you're some steward! Some boy! I'll tell the world you are! If the lot of us pull out of this I'm going to see that you're paid proper for what you're doing—yes, I am! Somethin' substantial, by George! And, Henry, come here! I want to shake you by the hand! Put it there! Yes, and my daughter, she wants to shake hands with you, Henry. Come ahead, youngster! Here's one genuine man!"

Miss Hawley was nothing loath and gave the steward's fingers a hearty grasp. He was all embarrassment, kept his eyes lowered and made off as quickly as possible.

As, almost at once, he reappeared, in a yachting cap, white trousers, and a blue-serge coat, and languidly strolled the length of the schooner, Hawley, standing beside his daughter, just inside the coaming of the main-cabin door, voiced his enthusiasm for the man a second time.

"Don't know as I ever seen a feller with more head," he told her, "and more git up and git. He's a steward? Well, all right, he is. But, by crimini, he suits me."

The girl smiled at her father wistfully. "Yes," she agreed, "he's splendid and I don't wonder you admire him. I do, too. And Captain Fellson hangs on everything Henry says. Daddy, I think I know where I made my mistake when I went and got engaged. I ought to have tried to care for some one who works with his hands—for some one like Henry."

"What's *that*?" Hawley stared.

"You wouldn't have liked it, daddy?"

"Liked it! I think it's a funny thing for you even to mention. I don't want you to go too far in one direction, nor too far in the other. Naturally, I wouldn't be proud if you was to tie up to a waiter."

She made a gesture of helplessness. "It's all right, dear," she said soothingly. "I'm just trying to understand your feelings."

From the quarter-deck Fellson was praying fervently: "Oh, for time! If we can only hold 'em off this one day! I feel sure the post heard our racket last night. If only they'd start poling down to us! Because if Mr. Platt comes alone there's a chance he'll be ambushed and cut off. Time! Time! Time!"

By now there was full daylight, for the sun was climbing into view above huge forest trees which had their bases not in warm muddy water but in solid earth. Only the tops of the big trees could be seen rear-

ing themselves a hundred feet higher than the creeper-bound summits of the mangroves; but they gave a hint of the great width of the turgid, shadowed backwaters on either side of the schooner, where giant roots curled above the surface like the long, round bodies of crawling things, where seines of vines hung across tortuous glades and deep black pools floated loathsome log-shaped bodies that were swift at taking their prey.

The swamps were no longer silent. The dull, hoarse cry of the hornbill could be heard and the *swish, swish* of its powerful wings as it swung across the red-edged river; while parties of fairy bluebirds, the size of robins, swept noisily overhead, sandpipers called and from the distant forest came the loud booming note of the fruit-eating pigeon and the ceaseless ear-torturing *whir-r-r-r* of countless cicadas.

Hawley, having his breakfast with the skipper, glowered round upon the tropical scene. "I'll say this much," he declared; "I'd rather die here than live here."

The Malay who was now serving the two wore a striped sarong and upon his queued head was a black turban; a young stripling on the main deck, in a hard hat and a flowing cape, was sauntering to and fro twanging the steward's banjo; while at the bows a barefooted, green-jacketed sailor was dropping a bucket overside, drawing it up full and swashing water on the foredeck to keep the sun from grilling the planks about that tent shelter under which lay the sick.

It was the banjo playing that astonished the pirates into making their presence known. From a point near by, to starboard, where some blossoming vines formed a curtain that swept to the sleek water there came the sound of voices, subdued, but excited.

"A-a-a-h!" breathed Fellson without turning his head. "I told you so! Out behind me! Can you see anything? I don't want to turn."

"I can see the front of a boat," the rancher answered. "Sure as you're born they're spyin' on us! Say! Hand me your gun! I can pick one off!"

"No!" interposed the skipper. "That wouldn't help us any and in case the swamps are full of 'em a shot might start 'em to rushing us. Let 'em stay right where they are, so they can see what good shape we're in. But look at Henry! If he isn't all

dolled up like a tripper!"—for out of the companionway had stepped the steward, in a floppy straw hat, a seersucker coat of wide brown-and-white stripes, and black trousers.

"How'd you get hold of that feller?" Hawley wanted to know.

"He came to me—walked into the offices of the owners at Sydney just before I was ready to sail. Wanted to go to Singapore, he said, where he had a steward's berth promised with a line running to London. Well, I needed a steward and he looked such a smart chap that I grabbed him, glad to secure something better than a Malay, you see, long as I was carrying you and Miss Hawley."

"Luckiest thing y' ever done in all your born days!" vowed the rancher.

The proas made fast to the rudder were worrying the captain. He summoned the steward. "If we leave the canoes where they are," he explained, "they'll be a help to the Dyaks if they attack again. And of course we don't want to set the boats adrift, because they'll be picked up downstream and filled with pirates to come against us. Bring some pig-iron ballast from below, Henry, and drop a few hunks through the bottom of every boat."

"That's a job I can help at," asserted Hawley. A few minutes later, wearing the plaid shirt which the steward had put off and with sweat pouring from his face, he was helping a yellow-turbaned Malay and a white-capped, white-clad sailor haul hundred-pound ingots out of a hold that was like a furnace.

With a splintering crash the first hundred pounds of iron struck a canoe. And as the great proa began to fill, with a sound of sucking water and dragged at the line of braided rattan which held it, once more a low gabble sounded from that screen of flowering vines.

The gabble grew to an angry chorus as one after the other the three remaining canoes received similar treatment and sank until there was visible only their high, carved heads.

From where he sat in his chair, his useless legs doubled limply under him, Fellsion shook his fist at the hidden enemy and taunted them. "There, blast you!" he shouted. "That'll put a crimp in your operations! Maybe while you're building some more you'll be minding your own busi-

ness! Ha-a-a, you don't dare tackle us, do you, you long-haired cutthroats!"

He soon forgot his triumph in regret over more bad news. With tea and quinine Miss Hawley had visited the trio of Malays, finding two of them so ill that they would not even chew betel, while the third, Kawal, lay dead. The man, stretched on his back, looked like a runner who had fallen backward while going at full speed. His eyes were very wide, his teeth set and his fists pressed tight to his breast.

Since it would not be wise to let the Dyaks know that the number of men on the schooner had been reduced even by one, Kawal was wrapped in his winding sheet but not consigned to the tide. Instead, the bulwarks hiding the work, the body of the Malay was gently lowered into the darkness below decks.

"Well, what next?" mourned Fellsion.

It proved to be Hawley's partial collapse when, suffering with sudden dizziness, his big frame measured itself along the cabin carpet. "My head's kind of gone back on me," he explained. "My bones ache and my legs won't work. I reckon it's too much sun."

Aided by the steward Miss Hawley got her father settled comfortably on a mattress. Then while she administered quinine, and sat fanning the new patient the only two well men aboard went on with their shifting of clothes and their reappearances; and now the one was himself, or Crosby, or the blue-coated traveler in the yacht cap, while the Chinese became by turns a white man and a Malay, or, bare-headed, with his queue swinging, calmly hung wet clothes on the ratlines of the main rigging and served broth to the captain under the awning on the quarter-deck.

However, when noon arrived it was no longer necessary to keep more than one man in sight aboard the *Echo* since with the sun standing over the river the Dyaks would expect those on the schooner to keep in the shade. For an hour the steward rested, with Moy Lott taking the watch, a green turban adding height to his wizen body. Then the former, feeling strong and revived but too anxious to rest for long, relieved the Chinese who went to curl up beside a pan of automatics on the quarter-deck, near the chair of the dozing skipper.

Now the voices of the watery jungle were still and the hot air, freighted and reeking

with the odors of rotting and steaming vegetation, held a profound silence—a brooding, disquieting, uncanny, nerve-racking silence. It throbbed in the ears. It gnawed on the consciousness, conveying a covert threat. It was full of sinister and searching eyes, as if the swamps had been suddenly robbed of all life save that which was waiting to take life.

With the sense of impending disaster upon him Hawley, still stretched on the mattress in the main cabin, drew his daughter closer. "Helen," he told her, "I got a confession to make to you."

"Daddy," she answered, "I don't want you to be thinking about anything but getting better. You know we're not out of this tight corner yet, so we must save our strength and keep up our spirits, just for whatever's ahead."

He tightened his grip on her hand. "That's exactly what I'm thinkin' about," he urged; "whatever's ahead. Suppose there's another shindy and things turn out bad. Well, before that happens, youngster, I want to tell you something that's on my mind and—and also, I want to hear you say that you forgive me."

"Oh, daddy!" She bent to lay her forehead against his fingers, hiding the quick tears. "Now you see? You're going to shake my nerve. And I want to try and be brave, dear. Why, there isn't anything for me to forgive. Not a thing! I've been unhappy. I admit it. After spoiling me, you denied me what I wanted most in the whole world. I'll tell you frankly, darling, that I think you were mistaken. But I love you just as I've always loved you."

"You're a daughter in a million," he went on huskily, "and God knows how sorry I am that I ever stuck in my oar about Lorin Doddridge and dragged you off down here. This minute, if I could, I'd swap my life for the chance to set you down beside your little mother where she's waiting for us among the orchards back home. Yes, and I'd hand you over to Doddridge so fast it'd make his head swim! Make up your mind, honey, if we git out of this we're going to start back for the west coast of the old United States as quick as a steamer'll tote us!"

"Thank you."

"But this ain't what I'm anxious to speak to you about. Nope. It's somethin' that come to me last night—like a flash, right

when I was fighting hardest. Up in front of me popped a black scoundrel and jabbed, clipping me in the jaw. Well, mebbe it'll sound funny to you, but that same instant, straight and plain, come the exact truth about this whole engagement business and why I been fighting your marrying Doddridge."

"But, daddy, you've told me all your reasons before this." Her eyes, weary and hollow, implored him.

His grunt was eloquent. "I've told you reasons, all right," he conceded, "but I ain't never told you the truth."

"Nonsense, dear!"

"Listen, honey. I been saying to you all along that when I objected to that young man I was considering only *you*. Well, that ain't so. I was thinking just of myself."

"John Hawley!"

"Don't josh, youngster. This is a little late for me to be honest but I'm going to make up for lost time. I repeat, I was thinking just of myself—not how the marriage would come out for you but how it'd affect your ma and me."

"You can't make me believe that, daddy."

"Mebbe I can't but at least I can give you the low-down. And to do it I'll start way back, when you was the sweetest, yellow-haired, brown-eyed baby that a father ever set eyes on. The first plan I had about you, Helen, was the same one I always had about my stock and trees and alfalfa: *To grade you up*. Your ma, she never had the right chance. I'd growed to voting age with no more cultivation than a weed. But I says to myself, and to your mother, 'Helen Hawley's going to have education, and all the trimmings that go with it. She's going to be able to hold her own with the best of 'em.' And your ma, she agreed."

"Well, she and me graded you up, honey, the best we knowed how—Hamlin's, Stanford, private teachers—sparing no coin, giving you the cream."

"Yes, daddy, you were both wonderful!"

"Up to graduation, yes, we acted sensible enough. *Then*, what? We was dealing, not with the kind of a nice everyday ranch girl your mother was at that age—we had on our hands a regular thoroughbred. But in spite of that, what did your poor fool pa want you to do? Did he want you to marry a man that had been graded up the same as you? Here I am, a rancher that wouldn't

think of shipping blue milk to a skimming station, and I oughta had better sense than to think my girl would marry the kind of a young man I was at Lorin Doddridge's age!"

Her cheeks grew suddenly scarlet. "I'm going to wish you'd never given me any opportunities," she said earnestly, "if it'll made differences between us and—and hurt."

"Can't get the world pushed ahead none," he answered, "without grading up its men and women. Hurt, you say? Well, call it growing pains."

"Just the same," she reminded him, "I'm your daughter, and awfully like you, and even if I've had more chances than you I'm not——"

"Any better, eh?" he finished. "Well, I guess I know a thing or two! You're first choice when the grapefruit crop's being picked over. And I? Ha! Oh, I've learned a little while I been traveling with you these last few weeks. We come off the same tree, honey, but we belong in different boxes. Yes, we do. You're up in manners—know what to do every minute. I'm glad you are. But your daddy—when it comes to the parlor stuff he's some shy."

"You're one of nature's gentlemen," she protested stoutly. "When you come into a room you make all the rest of the men look insignificant——"

"Soft soap!" he interrupted again. "That's where *you* been wrong about all this, Helen. You been too nice and generous to me." His voice trembled. "Stead of walking out of the house, as you had a darned good right to do, or telling me what was what, you've just bent as I laid my heavy hand on your shoulder. But anyhow, thank Heaven, I've got to where I've stopped lying to myself, so there's some hope. Youngster, there never was anything said truer than that 'Birds of a feather flock together.' That's what they do, and who'm I to try to change the old world's laws? You liked Lorin Doddridge and he liked you because you was two of a kind. And the mean truth about me is this: I didn't want you to marry him because I was afraid you'd move into the clique you belong in—a clique your dad couldn't gang with. In other words, I was just plain selfish—and jealous."

She shook her head at him. "Such talk!" she scoffed. "But I know better. You

don't want me to marry a workingman at all. You'd be terribly displeased if I were to get engaged to, say, a small rancher. And I've got proof of it. Look how you felt when I merely mentioned—er—er marrying the steward."

He gave a quick sidelong glance at her from under his shaggy brows. "You'll understand that, too, when I tell you the rest of the truth," he declared. "Henry's a straight, decent citizen, and can set a table as slick as a Jap. Learned it doing cook's police in the army, he says, and likes the work fine. Just the same he wouldn't suit me a little bit for a son-in-law. For the same good reasons that make me own up honest about Doddridge. I know you can't marry *below* your grade—with a waiter."

"Daddy!" She was sitting straight up, her bright head in the air.

His big face was sober. "I ain't a snob," he told her, understanding her shocked look. "It's just that I know a lot about *sorting*. You got to keep the kinds together, honey, whether it's oranges or lemons or young folks. And at last my conscience——"

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!—the four shots were from the quarter-deck. They brought Hawley and his daughter to their feet, when each instinctively caught up pistols from the filled pans. Then as the sleeping Moy Lott roused, very much on the alert for anything in the shape of a Dyak, and the steward came running, anxious questions changed to the laughter of relief. Captain Felson, still overwrought after last night's battle, so that he was able to think only of enemies and attack, had, on starting awake, seized one of the automatics lying on his lap and fired at nothing.

"One thing certain," asserted the skipper, grinning at his own mistake, "I'm still able to hold a gun. What's more, when I shot, and scared myself, I moved both feet."

His condition was even better than he suspected. For on making an attempt to stand he discovered that he could. "No pain, either," he boasted, "and my fever's gone. Well, I'll be on hand again if the bell rings!"

With Miss Hawley gone forward to administer quinine to the Malays again the steward made a grave announcement to the other men. "The Dyaks are beginning to gather in force," he declared. "From what I've seen I believe those swamps are full of them."

Standing, the captain took the glasses and made a slow and careful examination of the uneven walls of greenery on either hand; and made out, at fully a dozen points, half hidden by the descending shoots of the mangroves, the high, carved bows of proas.

"You're right, Henry," he admitted. "These swamps are mob full. We're in for it again and they're waiting just for night. They're holding off because you've made 'em think we've got twenty men aboard us. When they come, if we don't have help from some quarter our hash is settled."

The steward shook his head. "Oh," he said feelingly, "if I could only get my hands on a few of the useful articles we dough-boys had in the trenches!"

Later in the afternoon Fellson saw a glimmer of hope in the fact that the sky was gradually becoming overcast. "By George, if we could just have a storm!" he declared to Hawley. "And it isn't unlikely, either, because this morning was so clear. Remember how the mountains looked?—about a mile away, though they're ten times that, at least. This part of the year you get clear mornings when there's going to be rain; and rain means that the Dyaks'll draw off and build fires."

"That so! Don't like to wet their leather-colored hides, eh?"

"They're exactly like the Chinese in that respect," explained the skipper, his apple-cheeked face lifted skyward. "Detest rain. Chiefly, though, because it's cold. When the temperature's down a Dyak's hands gets stiff and he can't handle an oar or his old rifle, not to mention a spear or a bow and arrow. If a heavy, chilling drizzle should set in and keep up all night they wouldn't attack!"

The sky rapidly grew more gloomy. As two bells announced the hour of five the rain began—suddenly and in a deluge that whipped the muddy river into a sheet of seething white. The awnings poured like cataracts. The scuppers sucked and gurgled. And all the while, Fellson, wild with delight, added his shouts to the general tumult as he entreated the elements.

"Rain! Rain! Rain!" he beseeched like some rooter in the bleachers. "Come on! Keep it up! Give us the ocean with the bottom out! Atta boy!"

Other voices joined in with his. From where the torrent was pounding their shelter on the main deck the two Malays, un-

derstanding the skipper's joy, answered him with wild yells. While Hawley, cheered by the fortunate circumstance of a downpour, stuck his tumbled gray head out of the door of the main cabin and jibed at the enemy, who with much dragging at vines hastily forsook their various stations.

"Go on home!" he bade them, "and put on your rubbers! Yee-ah-ha-ha-ha!"

Now aboard the *Echo* all were more hopeful. The Malays, each well covered by a double blanket, returned to their betel chewing. Moy Lott made coffee and hot biscuits, 'grilled ham and baked potatoes. The others found that they had an appetite. As they ate, the steward once more serving the meal, they even found heart enough to laugh as they talked.

The river was steadily rising, inch by inch overwhelming the twisted roots that showed between the mangroves and changing the almost slack water about the schooner to an outward current that made the tautening anchor chains quiver and set the *Echo* to rocking as if she were a live creature that was struggling to get free.

"This storm'll help Platt," declared the skipper. "Above here the river shore is steep on both sides. So the rain reaches the stream right away and the result's a 'fresh' as they call it. The longboat'll come down on that fresh."

At the end of an hour the rain ceased as suddenly as it had begun. Then like a moving low black wall came the "fresh." It lifted the schooner's head till her decks slanted and her chains stood at a sharp angle. It beat and boiled about her, forcing her seaward a few feet as her anchors gave in the soft mud of the river bottom. And while those aboard her watched the phenomenon, coming into sight on the breast of the flood was what seemed at first to be a slate-colored log.

It was the longboat, floating keel up.

The blow was one to stagger under. Among the four looking overside none was dry-eyed.

"They got 'em!" sorrowed Fellson, the tears washing his boyish face. "Poor Platt and his men're done for! Finished 'em, probably, quite a way above here, where the river narrows. And the second mate never reached the settlement."

It was then that the four turned about and gazed into one another's faces. With Platt and his men dead and with no indica-

tion that the post had seen the rockets or heard the shooting what was to be done?

"If we could get a favoring wind," declared the captain, "we could work to sea. We can't kedge her down because we haven't got enough men to handle the anchors in boats. As the river is now, if we slip her cables we'll probably go into the mangroves or aground in a shallow. We've got to hang on right where we are. If we can hold out that Dutch steamer'll come along and help us."

"Youngster, your old pa's got his head bowed to the ground," Hawley told his daughter brokenly. "If I could go through to-night alone and take my medicine all by myself it wouldn't matter. But you've got to suffer, too, and that plumb breaks my heart. Well, they say chickens come home to roost, and, gosh, honey, all of mine're settled on the perch!"

Night was coming on swiftly. Grimly the five set about their preparation for the coming, and final, fight. There was little to do. Rifles and automatics were ready. Every one—including the girl—was heavily armed. Once more the sick sailors, fortified as before, stood up to take their places in the bows.

With everything quiet, just before darkness shut down the steward descended into the hold to fetch more ammunition. He did not return up the ladder with it. Instead he came tumbling out of the hatch empty handed, but turned about and slowly drew up a small box slung in a square of canvas. When, carrying the box, he entered the main cabin, he was all a-grin.

"Look what I found, sir!" he begged the captain.

Fellson looked. "Do you mean there was more of that stuff down there?" he gasped.

Then for an hour while the Malays and Miss Hawley kept watch on a deck that was shrouded in blackness Moy Lott, in the galley storeroom, labored like a chef who is preparing for a giant feast. First of all he built a roaring coal fire; next into large containers he emptied canful after canful of tinned vegetables and fruit.

In the main cabin the captain, Hawley and the steward were kneeling on the red carpet. Before them was a heap of broken bottles, a pile of planking cut into two-foot lengths and a keg of nails from the deck stores. Scarcely wasting an instant in speech, under the direction of the steward

they worked feverishly—making small, queer-looking objects, each of which resembled the crude model of a tiny battleship. Standing upright on the tin turrets of the ships and looking like single mastheads were short tails of gray, stiff rope.

Before any warning was given from the deck, more than a sufficient number of the pigmy battleships were finished and carefully piled in the waist. Now watchers were stationed at five points around the schooner. The Malays were still forward; Fellson was at the stern; the rancher to starboard, and his daughter, shielded by the bulwarks, was to port amidships.

The steward stayed beside the turreted pieces of planking. Behind him, and just inside the door of the main cabin, Moy Lott was squatted on his thin haunches. Before the Chinese was a shallow kettle full of hot coals; gracefully wielding a fan upon which was depicted those four Celestial maidens who represent the four womanly virtues—chastity, speech, work, and demeanor—the cook kept the coals in a lively glow.

There followed a wait. The Dyaks were occupying their former positions along the borders of the swamps, yet they held away, not sounding their eerie, falsetto head calls or banging their war gongs or even chattering. Aboard the *Echo* there was not even the light of a cigarette. And what puzzled the pirates was the fact that, merrily, as if willing even to act as a guide to them, that banjo kept up a tinkling.

"They don't know just what to make of us," whispered the captain from the top of the cabin trunk. "So they're waiting for the river to lighten up a bit. Henry, when they come we won't forget Mr. Crosby and Mr. Platt and the men. We'll make 'em pay for those lives!"

"Trust me, sir," whispered back the steward.

The river did not lighten. Instead the darkness thickened. Through it, paddling their way stealthily, foot by foot, came the proas, till presently, a score of long, black shapes, they were all about the schooner.

"Here you are, Henry!"—it was the rancher's voice.

In either hand the steward was holding one of those strange models. "Moy Lott!" he summoned.

The Chinese darted forward, his fan going faster than ever, so that this yellow face was revealed by the up shine of his fire ket-

tle. A little battleship was turned upside down and the tip of its gray, taillike mast-head pressed against a coal. The rope ignited with a sizzling sound and an out-flying splutter of sparks.

Watching it and timing it the steward sprang toward where Hawley was stationed and crouched for a moment; then with a quick, dexterous overhand motion threw the missile forward upon one of those indistinct, heavily manned canoes.

For an instant the boat and its many dark figures were illuminated. Then, as the steward, still crouched, started back to the waist, there was a very pandemonium of howls, a terrific splashing, as of swimmers striving to escape, and drowning all other sounds, and with a sudden great glare of flame, the burst of an explosion—rending, splintering, deafening.

Now warning shouts for the steward were coming from every watcher on the schooner. To starboard, the first grappling hooks had already been flung; while in the bows the automatics of the Malays were accounting for Dyaks that were coming up the anchor chains.

Almost leisurely the steward answered the excited calls. A bomb in either hand once more, he laid the fuse of one to the fanned coals and dropped it over the bulwarks, where a grappling iron was fastened. The detonation was immediate. He lighted the other; and as it flared hurled it on its arching way to where at the bows the anchor chains were beaded with climbers.

From the quarter-deck the bellow of Fellson's voice could be heard as he pleaded for an explosive, while his automatics kept up a steady barking. But he was no longer crying out in alarm; for in a reek of smothering, gaseous smoke the Dyaks under the stern were pulling away from the schooner in a wild panic to avoid punishment.

"Henry!" he yelled. "Hurry! Souvenir! Souvenir! They're back-paddling!"

Hawley was howling after the departing canoes in an excess of joy. "Something new, ain't it?" he taunted. "How'd you like our tin-can grenades? Going home with a crop full of shrapnel, ain't you?" To speed the pirates on their way he sent after them one mocking cheer after another.

He was still exulting noisily when he tramped his way into the main cabin. But suddenly his happy trumpeting silenced as if a hand had been clapped over his mouth. Before him, their arms about each other, and cheek pressed against cheek, were his daughter and the steward.

He came short so quickly that he teetered backward a step. And he stared like a man in a daze, knotting and unknitting his fists. "Why— Why—" he stammered.

The two paid no attention to him. The girl did not see her father, for her tear-wet eyes were closed. The steward was murmuring to her, tenderly and consolingly and smoothing the bright hair that hung down over the back of her boy's jacket. "There, there!" he comforted. "They're gone, darling! We're safe! We're all safe!"

The rancher recovered himself and began to speak: "Henry, I'd rather have a practical man like you for a son-in-law than the highest-toned gent in creation. So you take her. By thunder you've earned her! And, youngster, you like this man, and he's the feller you want. So that makes him the feller I want."

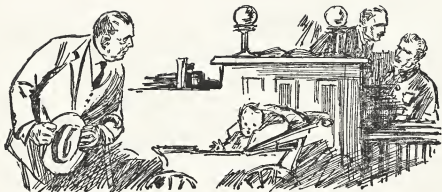
She turned toward her father, smiling through her tears. "Daddy," she answered, "I do like Henry—oh, very much! He—he hasn't been a waiter long and he's thinking of—of giving it up. And daddy, he wants—"

From where the top of the companion-way framed his countenance like a rosy moon Fellson interrupted. "Ah, now, Miss Hawley!" he chided. "Don't you string your poor father any more! Mr. Hawley, I've been in on this swindle, too. Young lady, tell him who this crack bomber is!"

"Daddy," she explained, "we've all played you a trick. But I just couldn't bear not to see Lorin for such a long time so when he caught up to us at Sydney—"

"Lorin?" The rancher's face was, by turns, old ivory and an apoplectic red. "You mean t' say that Henry?—do I understand what this here steward— Well, honey, your old pa'll have to own up that he knows a hull lot more about sorting out oranges than he does about sorting out men."

Another story by Eleanor Gates and Frederick Moore will appear shortly.



The Heel of Achilles

By Robert H. Rohde

Author of "Mr. Zandt's Professions," "Unsummoned," Etc.

The Great Macumber does a bit of magic sleuthing free—at a handsome profit.

THE door of the marble palace into which Kelvin Massey had transformed the wool of a thousand well-sheared lambs was one that few were privileged to pass but Macumber's name proved a talisman at the splendid threshold.

"You're quite expected, sir," conceded the liveried servant who admitted us, suffering such a diminution of hauteur as to reveal a very commonplace human agitation at work beneath the glacial calm of his exterior. "E'ad Mr. Bliven ring your 'otel again but a moment since. Frightful wrought up, 'e is, and not to be wondered at, sir."

As the man ushered us into a small reception room off the entrance corridor a door slammed somewhere in the rear and a girl garbed in a black dress of meticulous plainness came hurrying up the hallway followed by an inarticulate but unmistakably vituperative bellow. I caught a glimpse of a tragic tear-stained face before she turned and ran sobbing up the stairs.

The Great One's eyes followed the girl.

"That will likely be a nurse maid," said he. "It becomes easier to understand why we are here."

"Easier, you mean," I suggested, "for one of us to understand."

"Which is another sign you're no faith-

ful follower of the daily press and the Sunday supplement, lad," accused Macumber, sotto voce. "Had you proper regard for current events you'd not need me to tell you we've been bidden to the birthplace and domicile of 'Baby Billion.'"

"Baby what?"

The Great One lifted one of his long, miracle-working fingers to his lips.

"Guar-r-d your tone," he cautioned.

"Baby Billion is the name the headline writers have invented for little Kelvin Massey II., whom they otherwise gloat upon as the world's richest infant."

"Grandson of *the* Kelvin Massey?"

"Lad, but ye walk in a darkness!" snorted Macumber, whose stacks of morning and evening newspapers were no less vital to his days than food or sleep. "You've slumbered through the grand romance of American business life!"

He cocked an ear toward the door, heard nothing but another distant bellow of the bull voice and then went on: "Kelvin Massey, as I grant you may know, is the typical self-made millionaire. In youth and middle life he had time for nothing there wasn't a dollar in. There came a time when the biggest mobile fortune in Wall Street backed his raids. And then one day he looked a second time at a slip of a gir-l

bent over a bookkeeping machine in his outer office and cursed himself for the wasting of the years."

Macumber paused to listen again; still no footsteps sounded in the hall.

"Massey, the man of quick action, would have had the wedding that day week or thereabouts," he continued in the same low hurried tone, "but the girl whom he'd completely missed seeing for years and then loved at first sight had her pride. She was not for falling into his arms.

"It was during the curious courtship that Kelvin Massey built this house. When it was a home ready to step into the little lady of the outer office consented to become its mistress; and it was fated that on his own fiftieth birthday its master should gain an heir at the sorry cost of a bride."

The door back beyond opened and closed again, with a gentle deference now.

"I trust Kelvin Massey II., now aged something less than one year, will have been sufficiently identified for you, lad," concluded the Great One in a whisper. "Though the dollar sign tacked to him be gross exaggeration, Baby Billion would be the greatest treasure of the treasure house."

From above a wail of grief and terror unrestrained floated down to us.

"I no longer miss the significance of the weeping nurse maid," said I. "It's because something has happened to the youngster that Massey has called you."

The Great One smiled at that. "It has the sound of fair deduction, lad, though I've no more of fact for the moment than you. Moreover, I can imagine no other interest in Kelvin Massey's life in which his self-reliance would not be absolute."

He turned toward the butler, now in the doorway and solemnly awaiting our attention.

"I hope," he said, "that no harm has befallen——"

"It's just that, sir," the man cut in. "The little one's been stole, sir, by bloomin' abductors. For hall we know 'e's been murdered by now."

Again I saw exemplified Macumber's uncanny trick of asking questions with his eyes. Although his lips remained compressed the butler replied as if "When? Where? How?" had been verbally demanded of him.

"Not two hours since, sir. Hin the park, it was, and quite within plain view of the

hupper windows. 'Ow it 'appened there's none to tell, as yet."

After that brief lapse it was again the trained and impersonal servant who spoke.

"Mr. Massey," said the man primly, "will see Professor Macumber hin the library."

II.

Kelvin Massey, slumped in a chair beyond a vast clean-swept plateau of plate-glass desk top, looked up sharply from under shaggy gray brows as the Great One and I stepped through the massive door held open by his butler. His eyes came to rest in a fixed stare directed at me.

"My invaluable assistant in magic and secretary of extraneous affairs," said Macumber.

"Oh!" growled Massey. "Detective, too, eh?"

The Great One rose to a point of order. "The implied compliment is scarcely deserved," he objected mildly. "I am not a detective. My profession is that of magician. What you wish of me I have yet to learn, your men having informed me only that the business was immediate and important."

Massey the imperious took a few seconds to digest that and when he spoke again it was in an altered tone.

"Your pardon, professor," he said. "When I explain I am sure you will find my brusqueness excusable on the ground of a natural distress. I have been told by my friend Mr. Charles Forshay, for whom you will probably recall having done a service, that you have been successful in solving a number of criminal mysteries. He suggested that I get in touch with you at once."

Macumber nodded. "And I lost no time in responding to the call, be certain. You believed I might be helpful in trailing the kidnapers?"

Massey's enormous hands gripped the edge of his desk as he came forward in his chair. "The papers are out with it already?"

"None that I have seen," said the Great One. "But once in the house it was not difficult to gather what had occurred. The fact is all of which I have knowledge, though, and without details it is impossible for me to offer advice."

Kelvin Massey pressed a button and we were joined by a worried but efficient-looking man of thirty-odd whom we were intro-

duced to as Walter Bliven, his private secretary.

"You will supply any information which I chance to omit, Bliven," said his employer crisply; and then he turned to Macumber.

"In the first place, what the newspapers have printed about extraordinary precautions taken by me to protect my baby son from kidnapers has been poppycock—would God it hadn't! I realized no danger of the sort. The cordons of detectives dreamed by the reporters never existed; the 'special guard' consisted of a single nurse maid. You understand?"

"I found a verra liberal sprinkling of salt necessary to digestion of the stories," said the Great One.

"Sometimes the child was taken for a motor ride in the mornings," Massey went on. "Then he had with him, besides the nurse, the chauffeur and a footman. It also was the custom for the nurse to take him across into the park for an airing on fair afternoons. She would be alone with him for a couple of hours but her instructions were to stay within sight of the house and not to turn her back on the baby for so long as a second."

"The nurse has been in your employ for a considerable time?"

"Since the baby was eight weeks old; almost ten months. I do not suspect her of connivance, but were there a punishment under the law for her kind of criminal carelessness I'd see she felt the full weight of it," and Kelvin Massey's great fist crashed down upon the chair arm.

"I think it is safe, professor, to eliminate the nurse," Bliven corroborated.

Massey, chewing nervously at his cigar, resumed: "Marie—the nurse, that is—wheeled the child over into the park at two o'clock this afternoon. The usual time, I may add, and she would have brought him back at four. But at some time in the immediate neighborhood of three the baby vanished."

"Surely not before the nurse's eyes?" interposed the Great One.

"Her eyes at the moment were not where I've been paying her well to keep them. For that she had an excuse, of course. Almost directly across from us, as you'll observe if you choose later to go over the ground, is a small artificial pond in which children sail their toy boats. The water is shallow but there nevertheless was a great

commotion when a little girl tumbled into it."

Macumber breathed sharply. "Ah!"

Massey paused and when the Great One made no more specific comment went on: "Marie, as she tells the story, was seated on a bench some fifty or sixty feet from the pond when the child went overboard. She heard a scream and joined the general rush to the water's edge, leaving the baby sleeping in his carriage.

"It was not more than a minute later that she returned to the bench where she had been sitting, Marie is sure, for a park policeman was near and quickly retrieved the youngster from the pond with a boat hook. But she had been absent from her post long enough to give the kidnapers their opportunity. The baby was gone."

Macumber, eyes half closed in thought, seemed disposed to withhold remark when Massey came to a full stop. When he did speak it was to inquire with a gentle note of apology: "You'd not mind pipe smoke, gentlemen?"

Assured to the contrary—and rather impatiently on Massey's part, at least—the Great One produced the pebeian and superannuated brier I had so often begged him to replace, loaded it to battered bowl briin with the peculiarly offensive cut plug which he had sent up in prodigious quantities each month from New Orleans and reached for matches, all in an absorbed and studious silence.

"And the carriage?" he queried when the tobacco was aglow. "Was that taken too?"

"The carriage vanished with the child," replied Bliven, quicker of speech than Massey. "And there are other matters which may be pertinent."

His employer roused himself: "For what they may be worth. Marie disobeyed my instructions in more ways than one, I have forced her to admit. I had been very positive in forbidding her to make any casual acquaintances while out with the baby.

"It appears, though, that she has been meeting a young man in the park almost every day. He had been chatting with her just before the accident and was the first to run toward the pond. Afterward he assisted in her search for the child. Between them the precious pair wasted ten or fifteen minutes. Then Marie, realizing there was nothing else for it, went to the policeman."

The secretary again made himself heard.

"More significant than that, perhaps, we have learned that two rather roughly dressed men had been sitting for an hour or more in the vicinity of the pond. They were not seen after the baby had vanished. The pair had the appearance of foreigners."

The information brought another flash of interest from Macumber.

"An important point," was his comment. "And am I mistaken in the impression there was quite a gathering of people in the vicinity of the pond at the time of the abduction?"

"It is a favorite spot on pleasant days," said Kelvin Massey. "This afternoon there were perhaps two dozen nurses about, Marie tells us, and twice that many children. In addition the park policeman, who spends most of his time in the neighborhood, was there."

A subdued buzzing interrupted Macumber as he was about to formulate another question. Bliven swung the bracket phone to him and lifted the receiver. His face went blank and then gradually suffused with red as he listened and his reiterated "Yes!" rose higher in pitch and sharper. At the end of the conversation he leaped to his feet.

"Congratulations may be premature, but a baby found asleep in his carriage in the park has just been taken into the Arsenal station!" he cried. "The police suggest we come right over."

The cigar dropped from Massey's fingers. His expression swept my mind back to another setting; back to a never-to-be-forgotten moment when Macumber had stood outside a death-house cell in Sing Sing and told the man beyond the grating that his innocence of the crime for which he was to have died on the morrow had been accidentally yet irrefutably established. That man's stunned look was Massey's. The functioning of his mind and muscles went on automatically but the vocal organs seemed to have been paralyzed. He spoke no word until ten minutes of brisk walking through Central Park had taken the four of us to the battlemented and vine-hung old station house from which the good news had come.

"That's it! The carriage!" he whispered as Macumber pushed in the station door; and outpacing us with giant strides he rushed across the floor and bent over the baby buggy in front of the high desk.

With such a shout of horrified surprise as to bring an answering squall of infantile terror from the buggy's occupant, Kelvin Massey started back. His face was livid.

"The right carriage—with the wrong baby in it!" he faltered. "My kid's eyes are blue. *You* tell me, Macumber; what does it mean?"

III.

Before we took leave of Kelvin Massey the Great One had definitely engaged himself to devote his entire time and energy to pursuit of the kidnapers of lost Baby Billion—a promise made possible by the fact that we were resting then at the end of a prosperous season of appearances.

"In the matter of your fee——" Massey had begun, only to be cut short by Macumber.

"I beg you not to refer to fees," said he. "Investigations of a criminal nature are not a business with me, but a recreation. Mind, I wish to accept no responsibility in the case. The official police will be your mainstay and it would be wisdom for one of your means to retain one of the big national private detective agencies. My own activities as like as not may be along lines that seem to the rest obscure and which I could not guarantee to be productive."

"By all means let your personal judgment dictate your course," said Massey with a warmth that made it plain Forshay's indorsement of Macumber had been a strong one. "But your expenses!"

The Great One smiled. "If it will be your wish to reimburse me for any moneys I put out I can raise no objection. That will probably not be a major point with either of us, however. My most intricate case to date, as I reckoned it, required an outlay of something under seven dollars."

There was still daylight left when Macumber and I stood again on Kelvin Massey's marble threshold looking across into Central Park, for the time was late spring. The Great One halted there to reload his abbreviated pipe.

"What's the first step to be?" I asked.

"We'll have a look at the magic pond and its surroundings," replied Macumber and started over toward the park through a break in the stream of northbound motor traffic.

A park entrance was near and the Great One made for it. We followed a curving

path bordered with benches. At its foot glistened the waters of a granite-buttressed miniature lake dotted with tiny white sails. Three or four young men whom I rightly judged to be reporters were in animated conversation with a policeman who stood near the pond, his hands clasped behind his back, and another youth wearing ogrelike spectacles was interrogating a knot of nurse maids.

As we approached the reporter who had been talking with the nurses rejoined his fellows and all of them started out of the park, heading evidently for the Massey residence. The policeman assumed us to be newspaper men, too.

"I'm pumped dry," he complained. "Ye might as well be along with the rest of 'em."

Macumber did not choose to disillusion him. "Too many were asking questions for any one to get sense out of it. I'd appreciate it if you'd go over the ground again."

With a shrug of his blue shoulder the policeman indicated a bench set alone beyond a turn in the walk.

"Well," said he, "yonder's where the Massey kid was left. I was down by the edge of the pond and I couldn't have been watching the carriage from there even if I didn't have plenty else to do right then. That big rock and them bushes was in between."

The Great One calculated the distance. "More like a hundred and fifty feet than fifty from the water. And where was it, do you know, they picked up the baby that's over at the station now?"

"Maybe a quarter of a mile from here the way the paths twist. In the middle of the park and some to the south. It's a quiet spot alongside a meadow."

"It looks funny," I remarked, "that the abandoned child wasn't found before with a general alarm out for a stolen baby."

"Not so funny at that," contradicted the policeman. "As quick as the nurse come to me and told me who she was working for I called the Arsenal and gave the report. But what we did at the start was the regular sensible thing, which was to get guards set over every gate. How long do you s'pose kidnapers would stay in the park with a prize like that; and how long do you s'pose a search of the park would take?"

Macumber exchanged grins with the blue-coat.

"What's this I hear," he asked, "about a

couple of tough-looking citizens that were hanging around the pond?"

"It was most probably them that got away with the Baby Billion kid," replied the policeman. "They'd been coming here every afternoon for two or three days, just sitting and talking. I kept an eye on them but they'd as much right as anybody to a bench and a bit of fresh air. It was them I thought of right away, but they'd disappeared. They looked like foreigners and it wouldn't be strange if they was Black Hands. Every man on the force and every newspaper in town has got the descriptions by now. I give 'em out to the *City News* lad a long time since."

Macumber thanked the officer and we moved on. At the bench which the Massey nursemaid had occupied the Great One halted. Directly behind it stood a great boulder flanked by a heavy growth of shrubbery and a few yards away was a point where the wide walk was joined by another running from the west and two paths from the east converged.

After he had made a mental note of the topography and had assured himself that the bench was hidden from the pond Macumber pushed on toward the Arsenal station house. There he left me standing outside and I noticed that when he emerged he was carefully placing a folded sheet of paper in his wallet.

"It is what might be described as a note of hand," said he, lightly dismissing my inquiry. "As for the stray youngster, he's still where you last saw him, not being worried out of his rest by the thought that he's nobody's darling. Not a soul has put in a claim for him—which is interesting."

"What sort of looking baby is he?" I asked.

"Probably no less handsome than young Mr. Massey himself, and dressed in the finest."

"And the carriage?"

"Enough like Baby Billion's, as you know, to deceive the child's father. That was enough for me. I dare say there are ten thousand like it in New York. Tracing the sale of it and the like is work for a bigger organization than ours, lad."

On the way back to the hotel Macumber smoked up three pipefuls of his formidable tobacco. He was deep in thought, obviously, but what few remarks he did make bore no relation to the case in hand,

"I'd call it a matter more for headquarters than for you, maestro," I hazarded as we stepped into the lobby.

"So it would appear," admitted the Great One.

"You've mapped out a plan of action?"

"I have," said Macumber promptly, striding toward the cigar stand. "It covers this night and the better part of to-morrow."

"There's a part in it for me?"

The Great One appeared to reflect. "T'would be an unaccustomed strain on your eyes, lad. My first move, I do not mind telling you, will be to read all the final editions of the evening papers. The next will be to study similarly all that the morning papers have to impart. Thus I will have gained all the knowledge that eleven thousand more or less trained policemen and a hundred or so good, bad and indifferent reporters have been able to gather. Could I better invest the time?"

IV.

In the late afternoon newspapers, which I skimmed over myself under the handicap of a running fire of ironic comment, Macumber found no information concerning the kidnaping not already in his possession. With the longer, more comprehensive and more careful accounts in the morning papers he occupied himself for a full two hours. Looking up from the last of them he gave me a digest of their contents.

"Kelvin Massey was called on the telephone at midnight, by a man who spoke like a foreigner, and told that unless he got a hundred thousand safely into the hands of the kidnapers the baby would be done away with. A detective stationed in the house traced the call to a booth in Grand Central Station. It was too late when other detectives got there.

"The second baby is still a mystery, not yet claimed. Its clothing and blankets were unmarked. The carriage is an expensive one, exactly like Baby Billion's—if not the same—but thousands of them have been sold in the city.

"Italian squad detectives have rounded up more than fifty Black Hand suspects and Lieutenant Romani promises the usual important arrest within twenty-four hours.

"Marie, the nursemaid, is under care of a doctor w' double hysterics or something of the kind. The police darkly hint she has not told all she knows.

"A woman with a baby she can't account for well enough is being held in Syracuse, and men answering the description of the Central Park loiterers are in custody in Philadelphia, Montauk, Schenectady and Sewaren, New Jersey."

The Great One pushed away the newspapers and began to pace the floor in a thickening smoke cloud.

"None of that sounds very helpful," I ventured.

"It lets us know where we're at," said Macumber.

"And now what?"

"I'm thinking a stroll in the park would be refreshing, and as logical as any other procedure."

When we stepped into the hotel lobby from the elevator a few minutes later a buzzing as of a swarm of angry bees, accompanied by a feverish and jerky mechanical clatter, fell upon my ears. I traced the disturbance of the usual mid-morning calm to the brokerage branch office opening off the lobby. The connecting door, I saw, stood ajar.

Macumber crossed to it and I followed him into a room dominated by a blackboard covering almost the whole of one of its walls. The place was crowded and a scene of confusion. Tape from the scolding ticker was running through the hands of a hatless man with an extremely high forehead who was calling off quotations to a perspiring boy at the board in a nervously quavering sing-song.

To me the surroundings were unfamiliar but the Great One was in the habit of taking an occasional flyer in the market. He swept the excited throng with a glance and then scanned the figures on the blackboard.

"Whoosh, lad," he whispered. "It's not in Wall Street they mix sentiment with business!"

For a few minutes more he studied the board, while the instrument in the corner lashed itself into fury seeming to wax in intensity; then he touched my arm and elbowed a way for us both to the street door.

"It's a ruthless game they play on the Stock Exchange," the Great One amplified when we were outdoors and the clamor of the street drowned the ticker's irascible and fateful sounding. "They've the consideration of a wolf pack for a stricken brother."

He went on muttering savagely to himself, slapping at his leg with his light stick

as he walked. We were in the park before he again addressed me directly.

"Every man has his weakness, lad," he said. "For long years they tried in Wall Street to find Kelvin Massey's and they failed. Mind, I'm no admirer of the man except for the strength of him. From every angle they attacked him and always they found him facing them. His was an impregnable front. There had been Napoleons of Finance without number. Here was the Achilles.

"And now they think they've reached the moment to lay Achilles by the heel. As you and I have seen Kelvin Massey's weak spot, lad, the Street has sensed it. Perhaps it was at first just a few shrewd traders who argued among themselves at the market's opening that the man was not to be feared while his head and heart would be filled with grief and foreboding. But the whole Street has joined in raiding the stocks which the world knows Massey has been standing behind and the cry's 'No quarter!'"

"Do you mean," I asked, "that it would be possible for a serious dent to be made in Kelvin Massey's fortune?"

"It could be swept away," said the Great One. "The man's a speculator; his dollars are as impermanently his as the chips of a poker player. The hundred thousand demanded of him would be but a fraction of his losses at this moment and unless he can step into the market with a cool brain and the ability to put all other considerations from his mind he may face ruin."

We had arrived in the vicinity of the marble home of Kelvin Massey by now.

"I've the notion to pay a visit to Achilles," said Macumber, "and see can I not fit a bit of armor to his heel."

"But surely he'll be downtown."

"Surely he'll not. When I left you at the breakfast table I telephoned his house. He said his headquarters would be there until the baby was found, let stocks do what they would."

"But what have you to tell him, maestro? As far as——"

"As far as facts go, nothing. But this is a case where theories may help. I've one—utterly unsubstantiated, I'll admit—which I'm going to reveal to Massey. It may contain the elements of a restored invulnerability."

I asked no question, anticipating that very shortly I should hear what was on the

Great One's mind; but this time he conferred with Kelvin Massey in private and I was left, guessing, in the rococo reception room.

Macumber's face was grave when he returned.

"Mr. Massey has suffered a general breakdown," he announced. "His physician arrived but a minute ago and ordered him to bed after one look at him. The man's been burning himself up from early boyhood and with the weight of this worry piled onto him Nature has called a halt. That means your assignment to emergency duty, lad. You're to be posted at the telephone in the library here. Accept what messages may come for Mr. Massey—but hold them for me. I've been given *carte blanche*.

"I will be out, but you will probably hear from me in the course of the day. If newspaper reporters call you may as well let them know the true state of affairs. They could not be deceived for long at best. A central office man will be in the house and will trace the call if the kidnapers ring up again. He'll be listening in on an extension in another room and it will be needful for you only to hold them on the wire as long as you can."

"But how about Bliven, the secretary, maestro? Won't that be usurping his job?"

"Bliven is down at Massey's office with a power of attorney, doing what he can to save the pieces."

"And this means that Massey is out of the game?"

The Great One nodded. "He's so far under the weather that he'll have to take a long sea trip, the doctor says, before he can return to Wall Street—if he can still afford it when they've done with him!"

Then he led me back through the hall, installed me in the lonely and gloomy library of Kelvin Massey and left me there.

V.

Macumber had not been gone a quarter hour when the telephone buzzer intruded on my reflections.

"Is this Mr. Massey?" some one with a singularly ingratiating voice wanted to know.

"His residence," said I. "Who wants him?"

"This is the *Evening Standard*. May I speak with him? It's very important."

My reply that Kelvin Massey was ill

brought a quick expression of sympathy. Too bad; but of course it wasn't anything serious? Then followed a demand for details. Was Mr. Massey confined to the house? To bed? Was he absolutely unable to transact business? Had news of the break in the market been kept from him? Wouldn't it be absolutely safe to assume that the breakdown had been superinduced by the kidnaping? Had anything further been heard from the kidnapers, by the way? And, by the way again, who was the attending physician?

I answered the barrage of questions as best I could, according to the Great One's instructions. After I had hung up three other evening newspapers called in rapid succession and three times more I patiently obliged with all the information I had.

When I again lifted the receiver the voice I heard over the wire thrilled me. Before he had spoken a half dozen syllables I knew English was an alien tongue to the man at the other end of the line.

In his haste he ran his words together so that his first few sentences were wholly unintelligible but the general import of his conversation was not to be missed. He knew he was not talking to Kelvin Massey but that didn't matter; I could take the message and doubtless could be trusted to deliver it. If he ever wanted to see Baby Billion alive Massey was to follow directions to the letter. He could keep all the detectives he wanted to at work in New York but on the following morning he was to take train alone for an up-State town called Varick Falls, carrying with him the stipulated hundred thousand in bills of not to exceed twenty-dollar denominations. This train left at eleven a. m. and there would be ample time to draw the money.

Further, from the time he boarded the train Massey was not to attempt to communicate by telegram or otherwise with New York City. He was to wait in the railroad station at Varick Falls, where in a manner not necessary to describe now he would receive further instructions.

As the man talked I jotted down notes on a desk pad and when he had finished I pretended to have missed part of what he had said. A laugh floated over the phone.

"You think I'm fool?" he demanded. "Stand here to talk while p'lice come 'roun' pretty queeck? You jus' tell him wha's what—bye!"

A round red face appeared in the library door a moment after the man had hung up.

"Call was from a 'Worth' number, 'way downtown," said its owner. "I'd shot it to headquarters a full minute before he was done talkin'—but I guess he won't be waitin'."

Then the face vanished and the door closed and I was left once more to myself. Newspapers and news associations continued to keep the telephone busy, however.

By the time I was conscious of an appetite for luncheon the butler entered with a tray. He called what he had brought a "snack," but the food was more than enough for any ordinary party of three or four. When I asked him about Kelvin Massey he gazed at me sorrowfully, and I thought a bit strangely.

"Horders are 'e's not to be disturbed on any account, sir, hunless it's news the little one's been found."

Macumber called soon after I had finished eating.

"Exactly what I'd been expecting," he said when I had told him in detail of the instructions given to me for transmission to Massey. "That's the way they'd work."

His voice had a jubilant ring and I asked him if he had struck a live trail.

"Between us," said he, laughing, "we're making progress, lad. By the bye, Bliven will be there before five. He'll relieve you at the phone and you'll be free to attend to an errand for me and to keep an appointment I'll not be able to make. Both are within a mile of where you are and you can meet me at the hotel for dinner at six-thirty."

The Great One gave me two addresses which I jotted down. The first place was a Third Avenue cigar store where I would meet a short, stocky man to be identified through a blue cap, a blue shirt and the lack of a collar. To him I was to give two dollars, receiving in exchange certain written information which I might feel at liberty to examine. The second address, Macumber informed me, was that of a Yorkville lunch room. There I was to inquire of the counter man for a note left by one Sweeney for Professor Macumber and on receipt of it was to leave on the back of one of my professional cards an order privileging the said Sweeney and party to occupy a box at the Great

One's next New York appearance, whenever and wherever it might be.

Having got that all straight, I asked: "And about this message for Massey; it sounds like a life-or-death proposition and it probably will be the best strategy to play along with the kidnapers. Hadn't I better insist on——"

"By no means," said Macumber quickly. "Don't try to see Massey. I know more about his condition than you do; presently I'll tell you everything. Leave it all to me, lad."

"But if they mean——"

"Let mine be the worry. Six-thirty!" And he hung up.

It was nearly five o'clock when Bliven reached the house. He came directly into the library and tossed a bundle of newspapers onto the desk before me. I glanced over their front pages and saw that while with one or two the Baby Billion kidnaping mystery still held first place in the news, the others had put forward the smash in the stock market as a matter of greater importance, interest and concern, joining up therewith in significant fashion the physical collapse of Kelvin Massey. The *Mercury's* biggest type was used to broadcast the suspension of four brokerage houses and the imminent crashing of a number of banks was predicted in a subordinate headline.

I had expected to see Massey's secretary much more off balance than he was. He gave evidence of having been laboring under stress, but there was something so decidedly furtive about the manner in which he evaded and half answered my carefully casual questions that I determined to put up to Macumber a question suddenly arisen in my mind.

My own manner may have been rather stiff when I took leave of Bliven for I have not the Great One's facility in dissembling—as indeed he has told me himself, assuring me that he has found my candor one of my most refreshing attributes from the very beginning of our association.

A moment after the grilled front door was closed behind me I gave thanks that I had stopped in the entry to breathe in a few leisurely lungfuls of spring air which was tonic after my confinement in the stuffy library.

In the house a voice was calling—softly but not so softly as to escape my ears:

"He's gone!"

And even with the closed door intervening I did not fail to identify the voice.

It was the secretive secretary's.

VI.

I went to keep Macumber's appointment with my head in a whirl. Kelvin Massey's own home seemed as honeycombed with intrigue as the palace of some Oriental potentate. This man Bliven, the trusted secretary, holder of a power of attorney which doubtless gave him the handling of affairs involving millions—how worthy was he of confidence at the crucial time?

No straightforward fair dealer was Bliven; on that I'd stake my last cent. If he had not lied to me outright at any rate he had been withholding something. And to whom should he have been calling the word that I, the representative of another in whose integrity Kelvin Massey had given every evidence of faith, had left the house? Who would be in the upper part of the house?

The answer came with startling immediacy—the nursemaid, Marie! She who was supposedly in her bed with "double hysterics or something of the kind" had so far recovered, then, as to have generated interest in the goings and comings of a total stranger. What sort of interest? What the bond between her and Bliven? Why——

Of a certainty I'd plenty of news for Macumber. He was the one, anyhow, to answer the questions and here was I already at the cigar store he'd sent me to as his envoy; and inside, resting an elbow on the counter and keeping lookout on the door, was a collarless man whose shirt and cap were blue. I walked up with him and asked if he had an engagement to meet some one of the name of Macumber.

"Yep," said he; "and some one with that kind of a name had an engagement to pay me two skins for services rendered and the loss of me beauty sleep."

"I've been asked to pay you two dollars," I said, handing the bills to him. "You have something for Professor Macumber?"

"I have," replied the man, "and if you know what he wants it for you've got something on me, friend."

So saying he dug from an inner pocket a grimy sheet of paper which he placed in my hand. I studied the scrawl for a moment and when I looked up with a question I was alone with the cigar clerk. All the

paper contained was a number of surnames and addresses—perhaps a dozen of them. Nor could the clerk enlighten me as to the identity of my late companion. He was a customer who dropped in almost daily, but much earlier, and probably worked somewhere in the neighborhood if he didn't live there.

Having performed stranger errands for the Great One and always had the reason of them explained in the end I lost no time in idle speculation but moved dutifully and tranquilly on to the next stop.

The lunch room, a dingy little place lacking the immaculate tiling of those I frequently patronized at noon, was only a few blocks distant. The counter man—who was also cashier and cook, it seemed—recognized Macumber's name and produced a soiled and sealed envelope from a pocket in his apron.

"Sweeney said you'd leave something for him," he suggested; and I scribbled on one of my cards a note addressed rather vaguely to the treasurer of any house at which the Great Macumber chanced to be playing, bespeaking a box for the bearer and friends. The counterman read it carefully.

"It's the magician, ain't it?" he asked. "You work for him?"

"Yes," said I. "You don't happen to know what's in the envelope, do you?"

"You get it the way I got it," he replied significantly.

"By the way," I continued, passing the implied rebuke and unable to master my rising curiosity, "who's Sweeney?"

"He eats most of his meals here, but you can search me," said the man and fell to whistling a brisk tune to whose cadence I withdrew from his presence.

When I reached the hotel it lacked only a few minutes of six-thirty and Macumber already was seated at our usual table in the corner of the grill room. He glanced swiftly down the paper handed to me by his mysterious friend of the cigar-store tryst, then tore open the envelope and digested the contents of the penciled single sheet it held.

"Eleven and four make fifteen," he ruminated. "We were stung on the box, but it makes it the easier. The evening will see the job done, wi' luck!"

The Great One's cheerfullest grin replied to my look of injured amazement.

"Your arithmetic is accurate, maestro," said I, "but permit me to remind you I don't

know what you're talking about. Fifteen—what?"

Macumber's grin broadened, an achievement of the apparently impossible.

"'Tis the bounden duty of one engaged in detective work to speak in riddles, lad, until the case is solved. Under the surface all moves in a dolorously direct and simple line."

Our waiter, at the Great One's side, was tapping his order pad suggestively. When he had been sent on his way to the kitchen the face my mentor turned to me was no longer mischievous, but grave.

"Could my state of mind be yours, lad, I'd take more pleasure in our endeavors outside the realm of the magic," he said. "As it is I have joy only where develops the magical element of misdirection—and in the mystification of yourself. Ah, boy, the blindness of you *is* a satisfaction!"

Macumber lapsed then into a silence which he did not break until the soup was on the table. His eyes again were dancing.

"Eat hearty, lad," he counseled. "There's heavy work ahead for this night and I promise you'll have full share in it."

He reached for the pepper and made as liberal use of it as a Spaniard.

"And there might be a bit shindy at the work's end, if that's a comfort to you. Indeed, I'd strongly advise you slip that impatient pistol in your pocket before we start!"

VII.

Over the food I confided my doubts of Bliven, and the reason for them, to Macumber. His air of abstraction as he listened was such that I was sure my information must have shaken his confidence in a favored theory.

"I've had faith in the man," he said. "I will not deny he has placed himself in a bad light before you, but on the other hand you've at least tied the record for the running broad jump at a conclusion. I predict there will be a satisfactory explanation. Cast Bliven from your mind—for to-night, at any rate."

"I'm afraid that nothing even you can say will make a difference, maestro," I told him. "I distrust him. It is not often I would venture to pit my judgment against yours, as you know, but I am sure he is a double dealer. More than that, Kelvin Massey is surrounded by an inimical household. To whom would Bliven have been

calling news of my departure if not to the nursemaid?"

The Great One shrugged as if to dismiss the subject; but I would not have it so. I will admit that a certain stubbornness is natural to me when I feel myself in the right.

"Marie could not have been in her bed; or the call to reach her must have carried into the sickroom," I pointed out. "Moreover, the butler was in the lower hall. He had just let me out. He heard, of course, and that means he also is a party to whatever underhanded business is going on in that million-dollar sepulcher. It's my unalterable opinion, maestro, that your investigation should center right where it started."

Macumber smiled. "Unalterable is one of the most unfortunate words in the language, lad. How then about your telephone call from the kidnapers? Do you deny the Black Hand its credit for a good bit of work, handsomely accomplished?"

The complication introduced by the Great One silenced me. I still would not abandon my conviction that there was something devious in the secretary's conduct—in which, as Macumber himself was later forced to admit, I was quite right. But I could see it was useless to continue on the subject and I dropped it.

I had hoped that Macumber would give me some inkling of his own pursuits of the day, even if it was not his intention to enlighten me immediately in the matter of Sweeney and the two-dollar list of addresses.

That he failed to do but when we went to our apartment above I saw with a not unpleasant chill running up my spine that he dropped his revolver into his coat pocket.

"'Twas not a joke about your pistol, lad," he said. "It might prove a handy thing to have about you."

So we both were armed—for the first time since the Great One had admitted me to partnership in his hobby—when we left the hotel.

"Since there's much ground to cover and little time, a taxi will be an economy," said Macumber and presently we were rolling swiftly toward an address in West Sixteenth Street.

We stopped in front of a large building over whose entrance hung a sign announcing in gilt letters that furnished apartments of three, four and five rooms awaited tenants within. I was left alone in the cab briefly

while the Great One talked with the uniformed negro lounging against a rail guarding a deep areaway.

Macumber was whistling softly when he rejoined me.

"Score one!" he said and directed the chauffeur to drive north in Fifth Avenue until receipt of further orders.

On the journey the Great One's only remarks were addressed to his pipe, in keeping which alight he squandered a score of matches. We were within a couple of blocks of Kelvin Massy's residence when he leaned forward and told the driver to turn east. At the next corner, the Madison Avenue intersection, he halted the machine.

"Here, lad," he announced, "is where we divide forces in the interest of quick action."

I patted the pocket which held the pistol. "What's the program for me, maestro?"

Macumber tore in two the paper I had collected in the Third Avenue tobacconist's.

"You'll find the buildings all close together," he said, handing the larger section to me, "and I think they'll all be apartment houses. With each address you'll see a name—in one case two names."

I nodded. "Eight names and seven addresses. What am I to do about them?"

"You're to learn, by diligent and tactful inquiry, which name of the eight, if any, belongs to a man who is about thirty-five years of age, wears nose glasses and spats and a small black mustache and walks wif the suspicion of a limp."

"And having learned that, maestro?"

"You'll return to this spot and either meet me here or wait for me. The cab will remain. Mind this; you're merely looking for a friend who lives hereabouts. Whether you come upon the dwelling of the right man or not—he's not the one."

"That means," said I, "that the description's got to come from the other end."

"You're fair nimble wif many thoughts, lad," congratulated the Great One. "It would mean just that. And now be off on your way and leave me to mine."

Two of my addresses were in the first street south, one east and one west of Madison Avenue. Both, as Macumber had predicted, were apartment houses. And in each I found disappointment. Mr. Higginson was a man far advanced in years with gray hair and no mustache—and there was no Mr. Carter, I was informed at the second stop, the tenant of that name being a widow.

My third call was at an apartment house yet another block to the south and not, I judged, one in which rentals would be so high as in those I had visited previously.

"I am in search," I told the attendant whom I encountered in the lower hall, "of a Mr. Stevens who lives somewhere in this immediate section."

"A Stevens lives here," said the man. "What's your friend's initials?"

I do not think Macumber himself could have found a more graceful way out of the dilemma. Not an instant did I hesitate.

"There you've got me," I confessed. "At college we called him 'Skeets' Stevens—a nickname that carried him through the whole four years. I heard only a few days ago he was in New York and lost the letter before I'd noted his address carefully. The Stevens for whom I'm looking was a considerable athlete."

Then came a negation that thrilled me.

"Nope, it's the wrong Stevens here. This one's got a kind o' game leg and ain't any too spry."

"It was years ago I knew him. There's been plenty of time for the old boy to get himself bunged up. What does your Stevens look like? Is he married?"

"Widower," said the attendant. "And you'll be able to see what he looks like any minute now. It's time for him to be back from dinner; he ain't keepin' house, exactly."

Almost as he spoke the door opened to admit a man of medium height and build. I noted in swift succession that he had a small black mustache and wore spats and that as he advanced up the hall he decidedly favored his right leg. He wasn't wearing glasses of any sort but as he passed me and inserted a key in a door at the end of the ground-floor corridor I took note of an inflamed corrugation above the bridge of his nose.

"It's him!" said the hallman.

"It isn't," said I and hurried off to seek Macumber.

The cab was standing where we had parted but I had a wait of nearly a half hour before the Great One turned up. He greeted me eagerly with a "What luck, lad?" and pounded me on the back when I told him—for him a most unusual demonstration.

"Now to get the invalid!" he cried, pulling me into the cab.

Our destination was the Massey residence. Macumber entered and within two minutes emerged accompanied by Kelvin Massey himself. The financier was manifestly excited but impressed me as having made a remarkable recovery for one who so short a time before had been a nervous wreck.

Macumber gave the number of the apartment house in which I had located the limping Mr. Stevens and we were in front of it before another word had been spoken. The three of us piled out, Macumber striding in the lead.

The fact that the hallman had been called on to officiate in his extra capacity of elevator operator, leaving the entrance corridor deserted, spared me an explanation that might have been embarrassing as the Great One advanced to the apartment door at the rear and pressed the button in its frame, Kelvin Massey and I at his back.

It was the man who limped who opened the door. He opened it gingerly, only a few inches; Macumber's shoulder did the rest.

Behind me Massey raised a voice that did not belong to a sick man.

"Brewster!" he bellowed. "You, eh?"

Exhibiting a vigor incompatible with any degree of health but the best he pushed me aside, sprang into the apartment hall and pinned our terrified and unwilling host against the wall with one huge hand half encircling his throat.

"Now," said Kelvin Massey very quietly; "where is he—before I kill you?"

But it was Macumber who was in command.

"We'll take it easy, Mr. Massey," his calm voice spoke up. "The man will not escape punishment—nor those employing him."

He turned to me.

"Keep watch on this fellow, lad. That's right; it's as well to have your gun in your hand. I don't know whether he's armed or not, but don't hesitate to shoot if he moves before the police come. The responsibility will be mine."

Massey had released his grip on Stevens, or Brewster. He followed the Great One toward a lighted room at the end of the hall. A woman screamed as they entered. The next sound that came to me as I stood with the muzzle of my pistol jammed tight against the ribs of my prisoner and my

heart thumping hard against my own was Kelvin Massey's now familiar roar.

"My kid, Macumber! My own kid!"

VIII.

The following day saw some weird and spectacular gyrations in the stock market. Macumber, who had disappeared after breakfast and didn't return until the dinner hour, told me the close had been at what he technically termed "a new high level for the whole list."

"To me," said he, "the most interesting and satisfying news in the evening papers was that of the failure of Jonathan Thorne & Co. and the rapid fading from sight of old Jonathan."

We had dined well and the Great One's pipe was drawing free, auspicious sign.

"That sounds, maestro," I told him, "as if you were at least going to take me into your confidence and lift the curtain on what is still to me the Baby Billion mystery. You may be sure I read the newspapers to-day but they told me nothing. Every account was garbled, to my personal if scanty knowledge. Who, may I ask, is this Sergeant Duffy whose rare detective genius resulted in the recovery of the kidnaped heir?"

"I believe," said Macumber, "that was the red-haired man in charge of the crowd from headquarters that took away your friend Brewster and his wife."

"And the bankrupt Jonathan Thorne, whose name I now hear for the first time?"

"The brains of the kidnaping scheme, unless I'm ver-ra much mistaken. At least it was into his employ Brewster went after Massey had trapped him in a series of speculations and discharged him, and he was on the Thorne pay roll up to and including the time of his arrest. Thorne himself, as unscrupulous a trader as even Wall Street ever saw and the leader of a group of gentlemen bandits who swing many millions—or did before to-day's break for the sky—has been Kelvin Massey's sworn enemy for years. Aye, lad, if he's ever run down I don't doubt the man Thorne might be indicted right enough as a party to the abduction."

Macumber tapped the dead ashes into his palm and as he reloaded the scarred old pipe continued:

"It was one of the boldest and dirtiest and crookedest deals a highbinder of finance ever conceived. The two most powerful mo-

tives in the world combined in it—money lust and revenge, too, for Thorne in his day had been squeezed by Kelvin Massey. Massey had his vulnerable spot, after all, and his ancient enemy found it."

"That hardly explains the blackmail, maestro?"

The Great One stared at me.

"But of course it does, lad. 'Twas one of the elements of misdirection. What kind of kidnaping would it be without demands for money? And you could talk broken English yoursel' over a telephone fit to deceive anybody. Also, it was doubtless part of the scheme to get Massey out of the city—completely out of touch with the Street. It was not a raid of a day or two they projected, but of more like a week."

"That seems to cover motive and mysterious phone calls, maestro. What I'm anxious to know is what part Bliven played in the affair. I know he had something under cover."

Macumber blew a careful smoke ring.

"The part of an honest and faithful employee, lad," he said. "He was guilty of deceit in less degree than myself. The stratagem was mine. At no time was Kelvin Massey in a sick bed, but I wished you to think otherwise that you might be more convincing wi' the reporters."

"The theory I confided to Massey was that the abduction was but a device of Wall Street enemies to get his mind absolutely off the market and nail his hide to the fence. He left the house a moment after you entered the library, made a swift survey of the situation and laid out a campaign that cost the raiders a deal o' siller. He'd returned to the house wi' Bliven and it was to him you heard the deceitful secretary call."

"The butler was in on the deception, then?"

"He had to be."

"I suppose, maestro," said I, "that you think my curiosity is now fully satisfied. It isn't—quite. I'm still not entirely in the clear as to the method you followed in locating Baby Billion, so called."

The Great One grinned happily.

"I'll not say I wouldn't have volunteered the information if you hadn't requested it, lad, for it does my heart good to watch the face of you as you learn how simple the hardest-looking problems are."

"When I was told of the little girl falling into the pond I felt certain the case would

have peculiar interest for me. That in itself was misdirection, lad, just as we use it on the stage in our magic. It allowed a space when every one would be looking the other way.

"One excellent method of procedure would have been to look up the child who fell overboard and learn how she came to do it; but the finding of the abandoned baby made that unnecessary, as you now can see."

"You know very well I can't, maestro."

Macumber smiled once more.

"Well, you soon will, lad. We'll say that one thing already was self-evident. Baby Billion would not have been taken far; the risk would have been too great. Moreover, it was no shabby man who'd wheel off a baby carriage of that sort and get far with it. If the presence of the two foreigners was more misdirection, it was stupid; but I take it as accident.

"Who, then, might have a chance of stealing baby and carriage both at such a spot? Who, lad, but a woman in the uniform of a nursemaid? And the woman might not easily be punished if observed and overtaken."

I clapped my hands. "Bravo, maestro!"

"The child abandoned in the duplicate carriage was evidence of how thoroughly the kidnapers had laid their plans. There was the alibi of their woman agent—a natural mistake. She'd have only to say she had a baby of her own in the same sort of buggy, and she'd not be long in producing proof. Who could say that some mischievous youngster had not rolled her charge away?"

"Considering the abandoned baby a property of the plot, where would it have come from? A foundling home, almost surely. And in the modern foundling home they use a modern method of identifying the children for all time. I got the baby's finger prints while I was in the Arsenal station house—a smudge of moistened tobacco ash on the back of a letter will serve, lad—and it was not long before I knew where the youngster had come from.

"And by the same token I learned where it had gone to. That was the place of furnished apartments in Sixteenth Street. Brewster's name was Browning there. I didn't expect to find him; he'd left a month before to establish his new identity as Stevens uptown, and to get neighbors used to the fact he was the father of a baby and the owner of a carriage like Massey's, if ever question should arise. In the Seventies he

was a widower and his wife became a sort of combination nursemaid and housekeeper. Is it all not perfectly plain?"

"Thus far," said I, "but how did you ever trace Brewster uptown under his new alias and who was Sweeney—who, also, was the man you had me meet in the cigar shop?"

Macumber had taken advantage of the interruption to refill and relight his pipe.

"The two questions have one answer," he replied. "I had reasons no longer secret from you for wishing to know what families had moved into Kelvin Massey's immediate neighborhood in the last month or so. And who would have the information handier than the men on the neighborhood milk routes? Two big companies monopolize the milk distribution in that entire section of the city; Sweeney and 'Blue Shirt' work for them. Fortunately, it was——"

The Great One started up; our telephone had tinkled.

"Have him shown up, by all means," said Macumber and put the receiver back on the hook.

"We're honored wi' distinguished company, lad," he told me. "Our caller's Kelvin Massey himself."

"You'd not quite finished, had you?" I reminded him.

The Great One had remained on his feet.

"You could as well finish it yourself, lad," said he. "In Sixteenth Street I got a better description of the Browning that took the wee boy from the foundling home and it was you closed the incident by fitting it to the Mr. Stevens of the milkmen's list."

Hard and forceful knuckles came into contact at that moment with the panel of our living-room door and I hurried to admit Kelvin Massey. His masterful voice was booming a challenge before he was fairly over the threshold.

"Look a here, Macumber," he said, "all you'd take last night was thanks, but I'm bound to talk money with you. By Godfrey, I——"

"You may write me your check for seven dollars, Mr. Massey, no more and no less," the Great One suavely interrupted. "That covers precisely the expenses of my investigation in your behalf—exceeding, I'm sorry to say, my previous high record. The items consist of two dollars for special and necessary information and five for taxi hire."

Kelvin Massey dropped into a chair and sat glaring at Macumber.

"Look a here!" he shouted again. "Look a here!"

The Great One grinned.

"If it's fee you insist on talking about," he said dryly, "I'd have you know I've taken

care of mysel' liberally already. I've enough experience of the market, Mr. Massey, to realize the value of inside knowledge such as was in my possession yesterday and today. I picked up a tidy line of stocks at the low and closed out this afternoon. Seasons of hard work have netted me less."

Another story of this series in the next issue.



YEGGS ARE A STUPID LOT

YESTERDAY, when you dropped into your bank, you stared for a moment at the massive steel vaults and felt pretty good down inside yourself at the manner in which the institution was protecting your money.

You commented to yourself:

"That strong box sure would give the yeggs a battle!"

You're right. It would—a battle in which the uninvited visitors would be licked from the beginning.

For your information, those massive vaults were not built to protect your money and your valuables from safe crackers—they were built to protect them from mobs. If the safe makers had only the safe crackers to fight against—well, there would be nothing to it. Safe makers say so, themselves. It isn't the yeggmens they fear, but the mob that forms an outcropping of bolshevism.

One of the executives for one of the largest safe makers in the country says:

"I have read much literature, so called, that professes to tell how the safe maker is but a half step, and sometimes not that, in front of the safe cracker. Nonsense! If this were true bankers would not spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in putting in protective equipment. We have, in our employ, more than one hundred of the finest mechanics on locks in the country. They are men who have grown up in the safe-building business. But there isn't one of them who could unlock a standard lock. We hear of Houdini and his marvelous exploits. Trickery. It isn't humanly possible for a dozen men, let alone one, to break into a modern safe. The modern safe will keep out a mob of a thousand, or ten thousand, men for twelve hours, at least.

"'Alias Jimmy Valentine' was a very entertaining story. Jimmy rescued, in the last act, or thereabouts, the banker's daughter by scraping his fingers' ends, sensitizing them and shoving his ear against the door of the vault to listen to the shifting tumblers. Aside from the fact that it could not be done it was all right. Wonderful fiction. That was all. In the old days of safe building—that is when Valentine starred—there were ten sets of combinations and all Jimmy had to do, if he was an expert safe man, was to shift his numbers around until hitting the right combination.

"In the beginning, safes were made drill and sledge proof. Then came the black powder era and a safe was built to withstand that explosive. Then came dynamite; another step and nitroglycerin came into popularity. The safe makers stopped this by making their doors liquid tight. The present age is one of the acetylene flame. But the modern safe is made of torch-resisting material. The yegg could not break into the safe with his flame, if the maker were to permit him to work uninterruptedly for a year."

There are, of course, banking institutions in the country where safe crackers work. But they are in small country towns—banks that have inadequate protection. Even at that yeggs do not do their best work. In most cases too much "soup" is used in blowing open the doors, or the torch is pointed at a spot above the tumblers, or the lock, instead of below it.

"Yeggs are a stupid lot," says this executive. "If they weren't they wouldn't be in the safe-cracking business. It's too dangerous an occupation and the returns are much too uncertain. They might better go into a bank in broad daylight and stage a holdup. They would have a far better chance of getting away with whole skins and a profit."

A CHAT WITH YOU



CHARLES W. ADAMS of Woodward, Oklahoma, has a complaint to lay before the Editorial Boosters' Association.

"I have a very strong complaint to make against your magazine," he writes, "especially the last number. I came home last evening about nine o'clock, did some work until about ten and then picked up my *POPULAR*, intending to simply glance through the contents and then turn in—saw 'Millions in Motors,' read the comments casually and thought I would just read a few lines to see how the thing started—and that settled it. I had to read it through from 'kiver to kiver' before turning in—which was about six g. x. in the morning. Something must be done—either you make your stories less attractive and interesting or we will need a law to the effect that *POPULARS* mustn't be sold after seven in the evening. Really the story was a winner.

"I have been a constant reader of *THE POPULAR* since way back. All numbers are good, some better than others. I liked immensely, I remember, 'Chain Driven,' by Rowland. The best story of fiction I ever read. 'City of Numbered Days' and 'Gentlemen Adventurers' came next and 'Millions in Motors' runs a close fourth, almost neck and neck, in fact. If I could buy a back number of *THE POPULAR* containing 'Chain Driven' for a dollar, or the story in book form for two, I would consider myself

lucky—how about it? Is it in print? More power to *THE POPULAR*."

* * * *

UNFORTUNATELY "Chain Driven" has never appeared in book form and we sold our last copy of that number years ago. Perhaps some reader of this page may be able to supply Mr. Adams with a copy.

In regard to Mr. Adams' classification of novels as regards merit, he has chosen good ones, but he shows a bias. Two of those he likes, "Chain Driven" and "Millions in Motors," have had to do with running motor cars and with the automobile business. Our guess is that Mr. Adams either has been in that business himself or is fond of driving. Our guess, that's all. Perhaps it works the other way about. Perhaps the country doctor who drives a car all day likes to dream of paddling a canoe. Perhaps the mate of a sailing vessel likes to read about winning the Grand Prix. What do you think about it?

* * * *

MR. ADAMS complains about being kept up at night. Is that such a bad thing after all? Would we be better if we all went to bed with the chickens as they do on health farms? We doubt it. The man who never stays up after ten is missing the half of life. The kid who howls about being sent to bed is obeying a sound and primal instinct. Staying up late at night at the corner of Broadway and Forty-second Street,

New York, is nothing. One might as well be in bed for all the mystery and adventure there is in it. Everything is all lit up and everybody else is up—and some of them lit up too. Outdoors in the country or in a lonely house it is a different matter.

The house in which all the humans slumber wakes up at night. There are creakings in the floor boards and sounds from the window blinds. The tick of the clock begins to say something—if we could only understand what it is. Along past two, if you are in the country, the earliest rising rooster exalts himself and proclaims the matin long before any one else wants to hear about it. And if you are in the city the first romantic, mysterious milkman reins up his clattering steed about three o'clock. The motors that pass at that time go faster and trail a glamour after them, the lonely passer-by has a story to him. And if a group comes past, talking and laughing—they are from some midnight revel that appeals to the imagination. In the daytime you know what every one abroad is doing. At night the milkman is the only one who seems to give an honest account of himself. Burglars and policemen are equally mysterious in their nocturnal occupations. No! No one has really tasted the highest enjoyment of reading unless he has read a good novel of the mystery or detective type in a lonely house at midnight.

* * * *

TRY it to-night with "Somewhere in the Caribbean," by Francis Lynde, or if you are busy to-night, wait two weeks and try it with Edison Marshall's new novel, "The Halt and the Blind."

Hitherto we have been giving you the

novels of Edison Marshall in four numbers. In the next issue we will give you the latest and one of the best complete in the single number. It is a mystery story with a haunting quality and characterized by that powerful narrative quality that makes Marshall one of the greatest of modern writers of American fiction.

* * * *

IF sitting up half the night as we have described it does not tempt you, try something shorter. Perhaps you are a night watchman. In that case the night has probably lost for you some of its witching quality. You have had so much of a good thing that you are used to it. A reporter on a morning paper also loses some of his taste for the solitary moonlit streets. Ringing doorbells at midnight and running away may be fun. But ringing doorbells and staying manfully at the door to ask the angry householder disagreeable questions is a serious business. So if you want to get to bed before the clock strikes twelve try "Swizzles," a delightfully funny story of the West Indies by Theodore Goodrich Roberts, or the stories by Talbert Josselyn, J. Frank Davis, Solomons, Strang, Durand or Rohde. They are all good stories and would keep you awake all night only for their brevity.

* * * *

WE would like to call your attention to the two-part story by McMorrow, "A Man of Principle," starting in the present issue. It is so out of our vein that we hesitated a little before publishing it. It is so powerful and true a story, however, so dramatic, so absorbingly interesting, so profound a character study that we had to print it. Please let us hear what you think of it.



Mother and Child doing well

Every year these glad tidings are sent out by more than two million proud fathers in the United States. They are sent from the bedsides of the two million or more happy mothers who have had competent care.

Motherhood is Natural—

and where the mother's health has been safeguarded before the coming of her baby and where she has had proper care at its birth, the happy report follows: "Mother and child doing well."

Two-Fifths of the Deaths from Childbirth

are the result of ignorance or criminal carelessness. The medical name for the direct cause is Septicemia. Septicemia is infection, caused by germs on attendant's hands, on instruments, on linens, or on some other article used in caring for the patient. Soap and water alone cannot produce the *cleanliness* necessary. Hands must be made antiseptically clean. Instruments must be sterilized (boiled). A little everyday knowledge and scrupulous care in each case—Septicemia is prevented—and these mother-lives saved.

5000 mothers die yearly from bodily neglect before their babies are born. The mother's body is working for two. This puts extra strain on the kidneys and other organs. Precautionary examinations by a physician show whether the kidneys are in good working condition, and care reduces danger from convulsions to a minimum.

But what of the thousands of unfortunate mothers who have no pre-natal care and who, when their hour comes, are in careless or incompetent hands.

20,000 Such Mothers Die Needlessly—

die needlessly every year in the United States. "Put just one of these mothers in a vast hall. Let her die publicly, where thousands can see

her, and observe the outcry. Imagination fails!" So writes a great editor. Multiply that one dying mother by 20,000 and

you get a picture that not only fires the mind beyond the realms of imagination, but one that stuns by its brutality—for most of these deaths are needless deaths. *They can be prevented.*

10,000 Men Killed—

When this news was flashed from the front during the Great War, our entire nation was hushed to tears and bowed its head in grief. Yet twice that many mothers die *every year*

from childbirth here at home!

Millions are working for World Peace—working to save the loss of life in war. Then why permit the unnecessary sacrifice of mother-lives—the choice lives of our Nation?

Mothers in every part of the country need help—

What shall the answer be? Husbands, physicians, hospitals, communities must ensure absolute cleanliness and provide skilled care.

More women in this country between the ages of 15 and 44 die from the effects of childbirth than from any other cause, except tuberculosis.

From its very beginning in 1909, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's nursing service considered the care of policy holders, before and after childbirth, as one of its chief obligations.

From January 1, 1922 to December 31, 1922, Metropolitan nurses made over 700,000 visits to policy holders in maternity cases, not only giving pre-natal care but after-care to mother and child and teaching the mother how to care for the baby when the nurse's visits were no longer necessary.

The death rate among Metropolitan policy holders from child bearing

has been reduced, while the death rate among women lacking the visiting nurse service has actually increased.

Results obtained by the Metropolitan, together with the fact that wherever public and private agencies are working, the maternal death rate is being reduced is an indication of the possibilities when every mother shall have pre-natal care and proper attendance during and after confinement.

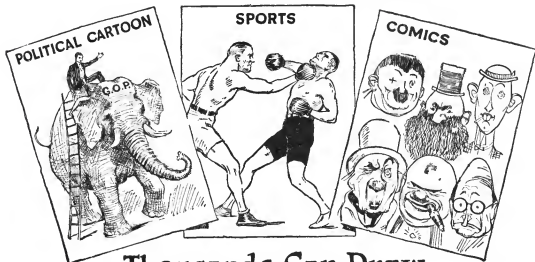
The company is ready to send a simple but scientifically prepared booklet entitled: "Information for Expectant Mothers". Your request by letter addressed to Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, New York, will bring this booklet without charge or obligation.

HALEY FISKE, *President*



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She did not have to go to the trouble of diet or exercise. She found a better way, which aids the digestive organs to turn food into muscle, bone and sinew instead of fat.

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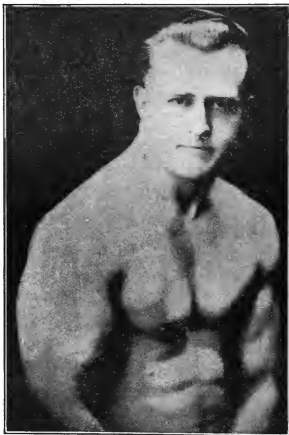
—he would still be a snake. With his present body he would be forced to continue crawling on his belly. So he would be no better off.

Of What Use Is Your Brain?

A snake is the lowest and meanest of animal life, while mankind is the highest. Do you make use of your advantages? Your brain is used to direct your body. If you don't keep the body in fit condition to do its work, you are doomed to failure. How are you using this wonderful structure? Do you neglect it or improve it?

EXAMINE YOURSELF

A healthy body is a strong robust one. Do you arise in the morning full of pep and ambition to get started on the day's work? Do you have the deep, full chest, the big, mighty arms and the broad back of a REAL HE MAN? Do you have the spring to your step and the bright flash to your eye that mean you are bubbling over with vitality? If not, you are slipping backward. You are not a real man and you cannot hope for the admiration or respect of others. *Awake!* Get hold of yourself and make yourself THE MAN YOU WERE MEANT TO BE.



Earle E. Liederman as he is to-day

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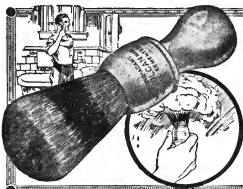
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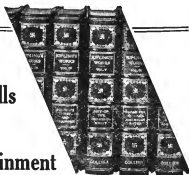
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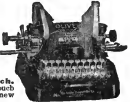
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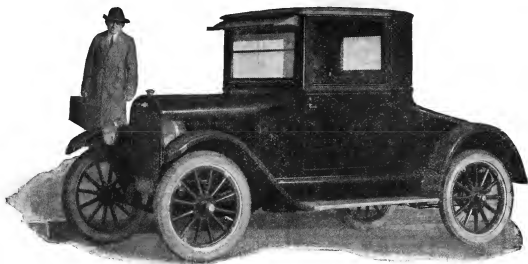
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